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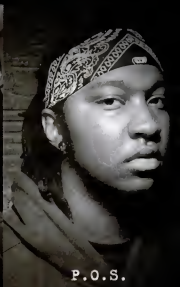
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[Daryl]



P.O.S.



I Self Devine



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Sponge



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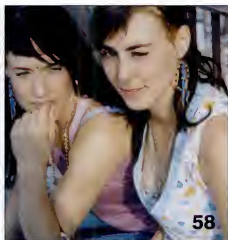


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CMJ[®] ISSUE 135

NEW MUSIC[®]

MONTHLY



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Assistant Editor: OWEN STROCK
Contributing Editor: KORY GROW

Contributing Writers: MATTHEW FIELD, REED FISCHER, JOE MARTIN
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Production Coordinator: JASON BLASTETTER
Art Assistants: RUSS MASCHMEYER, BILL SHOULDERS

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CMJ NEW MUSIC MONTHLY (ISSN 1074-8878) is published monthly (except bi-monthly in January/February) by The CMJ Network with offices at 151 W. 25th St., 12th Fl., New York, NY 10001. Subscription rates are \$38.95 per year. Subscription office: P.O. Box 1014 NY, NY 10113. Phone (800) 414-4CMJ. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to CMJ New Music Monthly, Membership Office, P.O. Box 1016 NY, NY 10114-1016. CMJ New Music Monthly is copyright 2004 by College Media Inc. All rights reserved; nothing may be reproduced without consent of publisher. Unless indicated otherwise, all letters sent to CMJ are eligible for publication and copyright purposes, and are subject to CMJ's right to edit and comment editorially.

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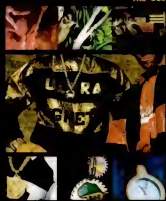
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RAKIM TOLD ME

Hip-Hop Wax Facts, Straight From the Original Artists

THE '80s



BRIAN COLEMAN

Introduction by Prince Snuccola

Marke, Ultramagnetic MCs, Too Short, Chuck D, KRS-One and even pimpster-turned-TV-detective Ice-T deconstructing his notorious "Girls L.G.B.N.A.F." ("If your girl was into it then you fucked up!"). Must've been hard work, Brian. If there's one things rappers hate talking about, it's themselves.

CANON BALLERS

Former *CMJ* hip-hop editor Brian Coleman is currently living XXL writing the rap monthly's "Classic Material" column. So naturally, Brian's got more reams of unused interview material than Uncle Luke's got mother issues. *Rakim Told Me: Hip-Hop Wax Facts, Straight From The Original Artists* (Wax Facts) has the golden era's golden boys breaking down their landmark recordings, including Run-DMC, Biz



TAKE A LOAD ON FANNY

Fear not, the Band's greatness has not been diminished by tacky use of "The Weight" in a cell-phone ad. A new five-CD retrospective *A Musical History* (Capitol) puts their mastery of blues, country, rock, soul and more in fine perspective with rare tracks, demos and former basement pal Robert Zimmerman sitting in on a few tracks. Long overdue for a revival among scruffy indie bands who've paid respects to the likes of Big Star, Nick Drake and Neil Young, the Band remind you that it wasn't just Marty Scorsese's direction that made their concert film, *The Last Waltz*, the best rock movie ever. Well, after *Airheads*, of course.



THAMES WITHOUT FRONTIERS

Finisterre (Latin for "the end of the Earth") is an atypical, subdued documentary scored by St. Etienne that spends 24 hours in London, paying tribute to the hidden corners of Her Majesty's homebase that foreigners won't recognize but true locals love. The project was initially conceived as a companion piece to the band's 2002 ambient-house pop album of the same name, but directors Kieran Evans and Paul Kelly quickly elevated it to much more than just a glorified music video. It's minimal and mesmerizing in one fell swoop.

SAINT ETIENNE PRESENTS FINISTERRE

A FILM ABOUT LONDON BY PAUL KELLY AND KIERAN EVANS



xREADx!

With original copies going to decidedly un-punk fetishists for \$600 a pop on eBay, moshpit nostalgia now comes cheaper and easier with *Schism: New York Hardcore Fanzine* (B9 Press). Schism chronicled the hxc scene at its late '80s apex, when the most prominent rags snubbed bands like Gorilla Biscuits and Warzone—what, you'd rather listen to *Daydream Nation*? The book includes every issue, 70 never-before-published photos, flyers and enough proselytizing to have you doodling X's on your hands in penance.

Photos by Bryan Wynacht

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This One



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Walla back y'all!

CMJ loves *Death Cab for Cutie* so much, we promised guitarist/producer/vegetarian Chris Walla (far right) we'd be the only interview this year that didn't ask, "So, what's it like being on a major label?" From what we can hear from *Plans* (Atlantic), the upgrade hasn't bungled their clever, cooing indie aesthetic one bit. We're just glad they didn't have to do a duet with new labelmate Rob Thomas.

Interview by Steve Ciabattini

You worked with John Vanderslice at his Tiny Telephone Studios, where you recorded *Nada Surf* and others. Isn't there some crazy battle bot factory next door?

It's called Survival Research Labs. They're not there anymore though. But it was crazy. You'd be in the studio and all of a sudden a bomb would go off. It was pretty dramatic... pretty great. He was building robots for the apocalypse. Flamethrowers, fire-breathing robots, probably napalm dunk tanks. Totally crazy.

Are you an inventor by nature?

No, I don't really invent things, but I really like to break things. I feel like I'm in the school where everything sounds best right before it breaks. Like if you have a shiny new amp, and you beat the shit out of it for 15 years, there's the special moment—an hour—where it's just hanging in by a thread. That's when it makes the most beautiful gasp it will ever make.

Did you use those Brian Eno/Peter Schmidt "Oblique Strategies" cards again this time in the studio? Did they actually inspire anything?

Oh man, they get used all the time. That's gonna be something I drag with me the rest of my life, whenever I do anything creative. And it's not so much that it's a rulebook, or that it's a manifesto, but they were created by people who were really in tune with creative blocks and creative boundaries on every possible level. On a physical level, on an insecurity level, on a purely biochemical level, like there's one that just says "Water." Like, "Oh right, I've only been drinking whiskey for three days."

Or maybe this guitar should sound more watery.

Exactly. None of them point at anything specific, and if you happen to draw the "Water" card and you realize you're thirsty, that's great. And that makes you feel more productive and more at ease. Or, like you were saying, maybe it makes the guitar more watery, maybe the whole thing needs to be underwater. It's as good as any toolbox I have for making music.

You did an online commercial for PETA. What was the thing that clicked for you to go veg?

I've been a vegetarian since I was 14, and it was just like, "That's gross," and that was pretty much it. I grew up around animals all the time, and there's just so many things in the world that are just wrong and unnecessary. And so many of them are way beyond medical research, and there's clearly just some noxious things going on there. Just byproducts, stuff we use everyday. The subject is miles deep, I just don't know where to start.

On the road, is it hard to stay on your diet?

It's hardest when you're in those places where the city was never a real city with a real cultural center in the first place. And specifically, I'm speaking of Phoenix, Arizona. If there was a historical or cultural soul to that city, I've yet to have seen it. And it's not that I hate everyone in Phoenix. There's nice people there and creative people doing great things, but I was there for three days mastering, and I was alarmed at the lack of real food options. It was strip malls for miles and miles, and chain restaurants. And the very best I could do when I was there was just Chipotle. And that's not a good sign. It's a city where there's no such thing as a mom-and-pop shop. And that's sad to me.

More importantly, are you upset you weren't voted sexiest vegetarian?

I didn't even know I was eligible.

You were on the list. Coldplay's Chris Martin won.

Well Chris Martin is a sexy man. I should not win, that's obvious. I wonder if you can buy elections in PETA the way you can buy them politically.

You should have smeared him. You could say you once saw him eat Jell-O.

Ha. Totally!

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

So, **WHY?**... What's This Song About?



"Yo Yo Bye Bye"

We were playing this show in Tempe or something, and this girl comes up to me. I was looking at her the whole time. She was really cute. She gives me her address if I wanna be pen pals or something on some 13-year-old shit. So I wrote a letter to her. In San Antonio, I called my girlfriend and told her the story. She said, "You fucking asshole!" and broke up with me. I was sad as hell, walking around, looking for a pole to do pull-ups on and started to write this song.

We were heading home from San Antonio. You stop at rest stops every three hours and there's always a fucking DQ. We were in DQ and this guy was like, "No more! I can make no more cones! No more cones! Only Blizzards!" All these fucking fat people in there like [in a southern accent] "Goddammit, I gotta get a fucking Blizzard? I wanted a cone!" I wasn't talking to nobody because I was so depressed, and then the line popped in my head—"I'm fucking cold like a DQ Blizzard"—and I started cracking up. Can I say that in a song? It was just the way I felt right then. It was so gritty it felt like the right thing to say.

"Fall Saddles"

This song is written to my dad. When I was 13 he gave me this tape he had just found in the closet. "Listen to these songs I recorded when I was 18." They were really fucking dope. When I moved to California I took the tape with me. And I found that past the songs, there's this letter to my mom. She had broken up with him and moved to Kansas City, and he had just found God in the Jesus Freak movement. He sent her this recorded letter, so that's his voice cut up on my song. "Your fisted language still affects my style, though I still catch your visions like a child." That was from one of his songs. Somebody says his voice sounds like Jerry Garcia, but I don't know if that's the case since I never listened to the Dead and he never did either.

Our relationship has always been a little weird because he has that basis of spir-

ituality; he's a messianic rabbi—Jews who believe in Jesus. Holidays are quite a mix of things: speaking in tongues and doing Passover dinner.

"Gemini (Birthday Song)"

This is about [my ex] again. We went to Cincinnati for my brother's wedding. We were staying at her parents' old house, which was empty except for a bare mattress on the floor. She was sitting there clipping her toenails and just letting 'em fall. Certain girls can get away with that. If I did that, I'd be fucking nasty. But there's a certain kind of girl that can get away with that and still be attractive for some reason. That became this visual metaphor for what our relationship was. The song is like a diary of the time.

An "elephant eyelash" is a hard-on. I like to make my own pantheon of slang. Isn't having a hard-on kind of vulnerable? It's an anticipation. You're always anticipating that things are gonna be cool in a minute. "I'm gonna stick my dick in a vagina in a minute, and everything is gonna be cool." But you're just standing there with a hard-on.

"Whispers Into The Other"

This was the only song written after we had split up. I stayed over her house one night 'cause I had locked myself out of my house. I was taking a piss and I found a fuckin' used condom in the trash can. The absolute worst feeling you can have ever. Needless to say, I couldn't sleep that night.

Why?'s second album, *Elephant Eyelash (Anticon)*, is a pre-break-up album full of Yoni Wolf's tiny snatches of hip-hop-centric mood poetry and a rollicking, Elephant-6-ready four-piece band. He is currently single, but the ex-girl in question (featured on the cover art) is currently dating someone who Wolf chivalrously describes as "a cool dude."

Interview by Christopher R. Weingarten

5

spot 5 Records that make sunnO)))'s Greg Anderson drone on and on



1. Earth, Hex: *Or Printing In The Infernal Method* (Southern Lord)

We were driving across this really bleak, desolate area of Finland, and I was listening to it on my headphones and it was perfect. The whole reason I run a label in the first place is to work with groups like that.

2. Xasthur, *Subliminal Genocide* (currently unreleased)

A black metal guy who is actually on the new sunnO))) record—he was inside a coffin for his vocal take. We put him inside of it and mic'd it. I don't mean this as an insult, but he's pretty socially inept because he doesn't like people. Imagine being locked in your house for years. That's what his records sound like.

3. Deathspell Omega, *Kénôse* (Norma Evangelium Diaboli)

They're a French black metal band. They won't reveal their identities, they won't do interviews, there's no pictures, just bleak. And all the imagery and lyrical content is this super-intense religious ideology that's based on Satanism, but just takes it to another level. It's not like *Cradle of Filth* or some crap.

4. John Coltrane, *The Classic Quartet: Complete Impulse! Studio Recordings* (GRP)

We're definitely influenced by jazz. I almost think that sunnO))) is a jazz band, since the spirit and energy of jazz is something that we try to channel.

5. The Accüsed, *The Return Of Martha Splatterhead* (Earache)

I've been listening to a lot of old mid-'80s hardcore on a nostalgia trip. I even went and saw them play in San Francisco a couple weeks ago. Since I lived in Los Angeles it's refreshing to go to a show where people give a shit about what's on the stage instead of trying to get laid or make an industry contact.

sunnO)))'s latest demon-summoning tectonic rumble, *Black 1* (Southern Lord), features monolithic towers of distortion, sucking abysses of feedback and Xasthur singing inside a coffin wearing full corpsepaint.



BOOK CLUB

What's Graham Parker Reading?

I'm currently reading *The Search For The Giant Squid: The Biology And Mythology Of The World's Most Elusive Sea Creature* by Richard Ellis. Meticulously researched, chock full of historical drawings and photographs and written with a wry sense of criticism for the patently outlandish, *Giant Squid* provides the most complete picture available of this apparently abundant monster of the deep that, despite growing to a length of 50 feet and possibly more, has eluded live capture and even observation to this very day. The remains of *Architeuthis* have been regurgitated by harpooned sperm whales on an impressively frequent basis. Sperm whales also have giant squid's beaks in their stomach contents, as well as the beaks of many other species. The carcasses of these huge cephalopods are washed up on beaches, trawled up in nets and collected, floating on the ocean currents. In so many different parts of the world that the animal must not only be widespread but also abundant—yet we know very little about this elusive animal. We have a robot creeping around on Mars at this very moment, sending back stunning photographs, but we can't get a single piece of footage of a 50-foot carnivore that lives on our own planet and regularly does battle with the mighty whales. We don't even know what it eats!

We strongly disagree with the title of Graham Parker's *Songs Of No Consequence* (*Bloodshot*).



The supercutest rock couple in North Carolina, the Rosebuds, are awesomeness defined. Married for four years, the 'Buds are Merge Records' very own slack mother-huggers! Since they're supporting their feisty new birds *Made Good Neighbors*, rock 'n' roll snuggiebunnies Ivan Howard and Kelly Crisp, were rad enough to let us find out how close they really are. We asked Crisp the questions first, then had her stick around to see how Howard panned out.

KELLY	IVAN	SCORE
Q: What did Kelly want to be when she grew up?		
I wanted to be a theater actress.	I think she wanted to be a 30-year-old, blonde-haired woman with long fingernails and a big long cigarette holder. But um profession-wise, I think she wanted to be an actress.	Most impressive, Ivan. SCORE: 1 POINT
Q: What is Ivan's most annoying touring habit?		
He thinks it's more important to get [to venues] on time than to stop and eat. And then I just go crazy because, "Oh no, I have to eat right now!"	Always trying to make us get up and go early. She has to have eight hours of sleep or everybody is in trouble. And everybody includes me.	She said: Not stopping to eat. He said: That's true. Not stopping to eat is directly correlated to not getting up early enough. She's really making her own bed. SCORE: 0.5 POINTS
Q: What is Kelly's least favorite discussion topic?		
There is a band that I hate, but I don't want to say what band it is... I can't tell you because we're friends with the band. Even if I say it out loud, it's bad karma. <i>(Is it Superchunk?)</i> No! I love all the Merge bands. We're not a band with any secrets. I think we talk about everything—even the bad stuff.	Running into the hotel, trying to get cheap prices in the middle of the night. I think she hit her breaking point this tour. When we stopped at this little small mountain town, all the hotel owners were related and they called each other on the phone, talking about this van coming down there with a bunch of people saying they're only two.	You're way off, Ivan. Still we sympathize with not being able to squeeze a whole band into a room at the Bates Motel. Also, Kelly, from the tone of your voice, we're not totally convinced the band you hate isn't Superchunk. You can tell us in private. We understand if you can't talk right now. Email us at: scoop@cmj.com . SCORE: 0 POINTS
Q: What is the most annoying thing Kelly does onstage?		
Ivan has been complaining lately that I don't say enough things about our music.	I just think she needs to talk more to the audience. She doesn't do anything that annoys me actually. [Pauses] Probably when she blows me kisses on stage.	She said: I don't do that! He said: Nah, she doesn't do that. I'm messing this game up, aren't I? SCORE: 1 POINT
TOTAL POINTS: 2.5 OUT OF 4 We recommend more time talking about your feelings (and stopping to snack).		

"When we play the song 'Anchor' live, there's a point where it goes back to the original guitar break. Sometimes we sort of pause there and do a wankin' solo or J.R. will play a reggae beat, just to fuck with people. But that was really, really upsetting to some people at [RCA] when the song was being worked to radio... to the point that someone actually made a comment to us about it. If your record isn't doing well, the smallest things get nitpicked."

Stephen Brodsky, Cave In

Cave In are back to their Hydra Head home with *Perfect Pitch Black*, an album with plenty of wanking solos and monstrous dub beats (not really) that RCA deemed not ready for primetime.



ON THE VERGE



NEW BUFFALO

The very early morning in Melbourne where Sally Seltmann answers the phone or the dusky evening in New York where we call from are both fitting times to be seduced by *The Last Beautiful Day* (Arts & Crafts), her full-length debut as New Buffalo. There are hints of Beth Orton (who guests on the album) and *Vespertine*-ish Björk in Seltmann's electro lullabies, but the undeniable influence is her own personality. Oh, and one blonde bombshell. "When I was 15, before I got into indie rock, I listened to a lot of old dancehall music and 1940s dance bands," Seltmann says. "And I have these Marilyn Monroe albums. I always loved the string arrangements even though they're quite poorly recorded and a bit crackly. I just love that old sound." When original production work on the new album wasn't cutting it in Los Angeles, Seltmann took her laptop and went home. "I thought these songs suited a more personal, homemade

approach," she says. "I wanted to have this naive quality, like a child, someone who is just starting out. I just felt it would sound more intimate and it would sound more like me if I was the one piecing it all together." If Seltmann's personality is mirrored in her songs, one could infer that she is devastatingly beautiful, nostalgic, melancholy and ultimately, comforting. "I noticed so many songs had this underlying message of, 'Everything's going to be OK, no matter how bad things get,'" she says. "You can get yourself to this point of sadness and loneliness and desperation and yearning for something, and that's an amazing feeling, but that feeling of knowing everything's going to be OK is an even better feeling. When I sing these songs live, I really feel like I'm saying to myself and other people, 'Yeah, everything is going to be great. Don't worry about stupid little things.'" >>>STEVE CIABATTONI

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S **CH**



CELEBRATION

The dark and shimmering self-titled debut from upbeat goth-dance band Celebration (4AD) will spark talk of bloodletting, orgies and whatever nastiness Nick Cave practices behind closed crypt doors.

But whatever's really going on in Baltimore, lead siren Katrina Ford isn't telling. "We really are hermits at home," says Ford, who has made music with husband Sean Antanaitis for 15 years in bands like Jaks, Love Life and Birdland. "I'm all about drinking tea and playing guitars instead of going out drinking in bars." This from a frontwoman who works audiences into a lather by performing full-body freak-outs that typically involve climbing onto tables and shouting demands. "I don't like to be onstage and think about me as the person who has to pay the water bill and wipe my ass," she explains. "That person doesn't deserve to entertain anyone." The rest of the band isn't exactly a sewing circle either. During performances, David Bergander smashes his kit relentlessly while Antanaitis throws all four of his limbs onto vintage organs, keyboards, Moog bass pedals and something called a guitorgan (sounds like guitar, plays like organ). The album, *Celebration*, sounds like an overzealous blend of Portishead and PJ Harvey, while TV On The Radio's David Sitek frosts the trio's arrangements with beats, tambourines, bells, flute, strings and even backup vocals by the TVOTR crew. "Creating with other people is the closest thing to sex," Ford says. "It goes beyond the physical act of it." >>>REED FISCHER



Writing costumed beanpoles Yip-Yip are a credit to the recycling program. Their gnarly lo-fi funknoise is spurted out using an array of vintage analog synths and cheeky samples, and their flyers consist of pictures swiped from their CVS photo lab day jobs (from which they were fired for touring). There's the Easter bunny with terrified kids on his lap, mutilated animals from an African safari and a kid in front of a Tony Tiger lowrider flipping the bird, all plastered with the Yip-Yip logo and used to promote shows in their Winter Park, Florida, hometown. "A guy was hitting on a lady filling out the bag to drop off film," says Brian Esser, one half the duo he squonks around in with roommate Jason Temple. "He hands me a bunch of negatives and is like, 'I want all the pictures of naked women reprinted. My wife

found my stash and burnt them. Little does she know I have the negatives.' I left

that for someone else." Yip-Yip's bugboy stagewear is also a recycler's dream, stitched together from pieces of old costumes. Their new checkered monster look (a step up from the "frightening white cat" days) was inspired by all the ska the two 23-year-olds listened to in the tour van. "We kind of have a feeling that ska is coming back in a fourth wave," says Esser. "I'm the one that always wants the songs to be a little ska-ish and Jason's trying to keep that from ruining our band." Jason adds, "Whatever genre we try to do just turns out to be Yipified." >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

YIP-YIP



CLAP YOUR HANDS SAY YEAH

I don't care to speculate. Other people can. For whatever reason, this has worked just by itself." One gets the feeling that Alec Ounsworth, the songwriter at the helm of independent rock's latest torpedo, Clap Your Hands Say Yeah, has better things to do than worry himself with things like the music industry or a "scene." The Philly area native has never lived in the same city as his Brooklyn bandmates, nor has he bothered to link up with a label... yet. Regardless, his band's self-titled debut album, an inspiring and impassioned collection of upbeat rock, eclectic crescendos and new wave wailing, has, by its own virtues (and a healthy Internet hum), blossomed into a critics' darling, in about as much time as it takes to go on summer vacation. It's a rich and colorful pastiche that drips with story and atmosphere, but Ounsworth shies away from acknowledging overt reference points, certainly appreciating but not necessarily endorsing the unstoppable spate of Talking Heads comparisons. There are no specific authors or musicians he's drawing from, he says. "I feel like at a certain point, if you resign yourself, if you let yourself be taken over by instinct, then not only does the music you listen to come into play, but everything that you've been exposed to." Lately, Ounsworth has been reading a lot of Lewis Carroll and teaching himself the accordion—not that this means anything, of course. But one can hope. >>>STEVEN CHEN



PEOPLE IN PLANES



Promising young band signs to major label, releases album, gets dropped, regroup, adds keyboardist and gives itself a fancy new name. Hardly an unfamiliar story from the morass of the record industry, but Welsh quintet People In Planes put an engagingly dark spin on their hard-luck experience as the band formerly known as Tetra Splendour, channeling paranoid power-pop and raucous riff-rock through the apocalyptic bullhorn of neighbors like Muse and the Manic Street Preachers. "It's basically about seeing your dreams built up and then having it all ripped away by people who don't care," says guitarist Pete Roberts about their domestic debut, *As Far As The Eye Can See*. Things have looked up since the band flew stateside for the SXSW conference and confirmed a deal with Wind-Up (alongside such unlikely affiliates as Evanescence and Drowning Pool)—but with any luck they'll find further inspiration playing to arm-crossing American audiences this fall. "You can't really describe how much of a culture shock it's been," admits singer Gareth "Gaz" Jones about hanging out at SXSW: "We saw Queens Of The Stone Age, and you could literally walk without touching anyone to the front of the stage. It was a bit tame, really." —DANIEL LEVIN-BECKER



T heir name is furry and their music is pastoral, but make no mistake: Brooklyn's Grizzly Bear didn't set out to conquer any hipper-than-thou "avant-folk" scene. "I wasn't even aware of avant-folk or the Animal Collective when I came up with the name," singer/poppa bear Edward Droste says. "It was a nickname I had for an [ex-boyfriend] and kind of a joke. Anyone who knows me knows I'm not a camping kind of guy." If Droste's line seems a bit cloying, the sallow navel-gazing of *Hom Of Plenty* (Kanine), the band's critically adored debut, makes a stronger case. Draped in soft loops and a baggy net of acoustic guitars, the record reveals an unaffected, hypnotic animal that's more stoner Sebadoh than freaked-out Fahey. The initially solo-minded singer isn't dwelling on his breakthrough—*Plenty*'s upcoming re-release will come with a disc of remixes (by Solex, Tim Sweeney, Ariel Pink and more) and the band now exists as psychedelically rockin' four-piece. "The next record is going to be thick and layered," Droste says. "We're recording it at my Mom's house [in Massachusetts]. Brooklyn isn't good for our creativity. There are too many distractions. And hangovers." >>>JOE MARTIN



LICHENS

M aking Eno-esque glaciers from layers of moans and coos, then adding a layer of idyllic guitar shiver, Robert Lowe, a.k.a. Lichens, creates a slowly-expanding and hypnotic swirl of the tangible and the uncontrollable. The bassist for the 90 Day Men (and occasional TV On The Radio keyman), refuses to do overdubs, thus allowing anything that sneaks its way into the microphone to remain an essential part of the composition, whether it be cars and street noises outside the Chicago art-punk loft where he recorded most of his debut, *The Psychic Nature Of Being* (Kranky), or the familiar click-clack of an activated loop-pedal. "To a listener, they would be another little mystery," says Lowe. "It's not clean, what I do. There's no antiseptic." A Missourian child entranced by film scores who grew into an adult in love with world music and 20th century composition, Lowe focuses on mood as much as chance, treating each recording like a live performance, mistakes be damned. When putting together a soundscape for an artist's installation in Chicago, Lowe's cell-phone starting blowing up, and its familiar chimes got caught in one of his loops. He ended up keeping it. "Once I start, there's no turning back," Lowe says. "Ultimately, all accidents are happy accidents." >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



Me, Michael Madsen and Pope John Paul Deuce used to go and hang out all the time," says Every Time I Die's eight-foot-tall, 100-year-old guitarist Andy Williams. "Madsen used to just, you know, get him all liquored up, and yeah, that was about it." While only two parts of Williams's testimonial passed our fact-checking department—the *Reservoir Dogs* actor does appear in ETID's "Kill The Music" video and Williams, 27, does, in fact, play guitar—it's his band's boy-who-cried-wolf bravado that pushes these Buffalo metalcore screechers ahead of the pack. From antics such as Williams's skintight, white stage pants ("I looked really, really fruity") to his band's now-infamous Hellfest appearance where they dressed in mustaches, mullets and daisy dukes, ETID's anything-for-a-larf reputation has begun to precede them. Fans have grown mustaches, seeking Williams's approval. And at a San Francisco concert, about 13 attendees dressed entirely in '70s apparel to show their appreciation, which Williams says the band eats right up. While ETID makes no new concessions on its third record, *Gutter Phenomenon* (Ferret), they had the extra time this go-around to back their stage personas with "structured" music they're finally proud of. Meanwhile, Williams is getting a leg-up on the media by spreading every semi-vicious rumor he can think of, pushing his tongue right through his cheek. "[Madsen] was like, 'Yeah man, I seen you guys in Tempe... You might have seen me; me and my friend were holding each other like a wheelbarrow,'" he says. "It was really funny, because his friend showed up too, and they did the move right therel" >>>KORY GROW



HOPEWELL

Fans of Hopewell's multi-tendrilled, psychedelic pop may not find it surprising that auteur Jason Russo's formative years were colored by a strict Catholic upbringing (his father is an ex-Trappist monk), scored by the *The Muppets Show* soundtrack and *Jesus Christ Superstar* ("total acid rock") and accelerated by indie-terrific mentors (at 19 he toured the world as Mercury Rev's bassist). But what'll surely surprise is the bald-faced rocking found on the NY band's latest album, *Hopewell And The Birds Of Appetite* (Tee Pee). "My nature is to do the opposite of what people expect, to confound them," says the singer/guitarist, between gulps from an inexplicably green smoothie. "We wanted to take a sledgehammer to the space rock and psychedelic thing." And conveniently enough, the hammer actually fell: "The album's called *Birds Of Appetite* because the band was literally pulled apart by itself during the recording," Russo explains. "This is the sound of a band breaking up while recording and somehow continuing to move on. You can hear the volatility." While he hasn't entirely abandoned his heady tendencies—the album's title was inspired by Thomas Merton's musings in *Zen And The Birds Of Appetite* about the various elements that pull human consciousness away from its resting state—he's resolved to preserve Hopewell's spirit, while at the same time encouraging its evolution. "While we still experiment and love psychedelic music, we don't want to be pigeonholed into making trance-inducing noises without emotional content or feeling," Russo says. "We're over being cool." >>>BRAD ANGLE



For someone whose first tape was Onyx's *Bacdafucup*, rapper Omega Watts has impeccable table manners, never letting as much as a soda-bred burp get by him without an "excuse me." Born Milton Campbell, the producer, emcee and graphic designer is no Sticky Fingaz. Hell, he doesn't even like hardcore rap anymore. Milton's just a pleasant dude from Brooklyn, living in Portland, Oregon, who happens to be nice with the beats, rhymes and design. "Graphic design pays the bills; that's my bread and butter," Campbell explains. "But music, I didn't even plan to make it a precedent. I didn't want to emcee too much. I wanted to produce more and that was really the focus." Omega's passion for production shows through on his solo debut, *The Find* (Ubiquity). Though no slacker on the mic, the lush musically of his loop-based rhythms and innate knack for switching beats mid-song are a testament to his talent. Speaking of testaments, Milton is also a Christian rapper, though it might take a few listens to pick it up. "I'm more subtle," Milton explains. "I wanna live out that lifestyle without having to throw it down anyone's neck, but represent it without being ashamed of it either." For him, how you act in life is more important than what you preach on the mic. As he puts it, "Music itself can't save anybody." >>>OWEN STRICK

I didn't really have any friends here," Devin Davis says, bashfully, of his move from Jacksonville, Florida, to Chicago. This explains the title of his *Lonely People Of The World, Unite!* (Mousse), recorded—at home and alone—over two years. "It was really tough. Meeting people is not easy, or at least it wasn't for me." Devin is making more friends now thanks to the critical response to *Lonely People*, which helped him land an opening slot for Death Cab For Cutie earlier this year. The album is a little bit of Shins and New Pornographers under the influence of early, hill-billyish Kinks, evoking melancholy, amusement, and rock bliss with ease. "The best part is hearing from people who like it. One guy wrote in like, 'Yeah, it's true, we do all live on a deserted eyeland,'" he says, referencing one of his lyrics. "It's really neat to have connected like that." Davis knows connections can be difficult, especially in large, festive crowds. "I started recording fireworks back in Florida. I was really into found sound... There's so many emotions that I feel whenever I see fireworks. All the people cheering, and it represents war, or whatever. It's this really weird mass-of-humanity type of experience. It always makes me kind of sad." As he does throughout the album, he chooses to see a lighter side: "But they do look really cool, too." >>>JOSHUA STARR



DEVIN DAVIS



HOOF DREAMS

Deerhoof Walk A Mile With One Xiu

Interview: Jamie Stewart of Xiu Xiu

Cuddly art-noise spasms Deerhoof have gussied up their Trout Masks and turned their peevish, angular punk into gorgeous pop on their sixth record, *The Runners Four*, adding new layers of sensitive conviction while losing none of the hypertensive friction. SRC labelmate and kindred free-spirit Jamie Stewart of Xiu Xiu confronts vocalist/bassist Satomi Matsuzaki, guitarists Chris Cohen and John Dieterich, and drummer Greg Saunier about their expanding universe.

On *The Runners Four*, Chris and John sing for what I think is the first time on a Deerhoof record. What was that like? Singing is so personal and can almost be private. Did it burst forth or was it difficult?

CHRIS: I couldn't hold back any longer. Singing is my first instrument.

GREG: I think Chris sounds kind of like Christopher Cross. I was looking for some sunflower seeds in Walgreens today and they were playing the theme from *Arthur* and I thought, "Whoa, it's Chris!"

Greg, you are playing with a full drum set after having used a kick, snare and single cymbal forever. What prompted the change?

CHRIS: Greg saw a picture of Van Halen circa 1983 and begged us to let him have the Alex Van Halen signature set: 24-piece, complete with gong and three hi-hats. However, due to limited space in the minivan, he had to settle for just the two extra toms.

GREG: I always thought that if you only had two or three different sounds, you wouldn't be able to rely on "sounds" to make your music interesting, you'd have to think of "ideas." Having a smaller drum set made me more

creative. Anyway, Satomi thought if I started hitting toms, they wouldn't be as loud as me hitting the snare drum, so actually the point of the bigger drum set was to make me quieter. I don't think it worked.

Satomi, your dancing has become beautifully intertwined with the music live. Where did it come from? What are your physical inspirations for it?

SATOMI: I don't think about it much. I improvise on stage. My movements are simple. They probably came from animal behaviors, neighborhood people and action movies. When I like new movements then I keep them and use them as routines. It's like a musical!

From the first time I heard the song "Konoko Kitten" from the *Green Cosmos EP*, I have not been able to stop whistling the melody. What is the story of that song?

SATOMI: It's not "Konoko Kitten." "Konoko" means "this child" in Japanese. It's "Konoko Kitten." "Koneko" is kitten. It came out from nowhere. I just love kittens.

What is your favorite piece of music equipment you have or currently own?

GREG: I like my drums, no surprise there. It's like when I ask my Italian friends what their favorite food is and they always say, "Pasta!"

CHRIS: For guitar tones, I use a knock-off Les Paul into my Sony Trinitron television set. It rocks! You can watch movies while you do it and make up your own soundtrack.

What is your religious background, and how do you feel about religion now?

SATOMI: My mom is Buddhist. I am not particularly

involved with hers but she signed me up for the same religion when I was born. I memorized a long chart when I was five. I can still do it.

JOHN: My parents attempted to get me to go to Sunday school, but it didn't work out so well. My last trip ended with me screaming and crying and planting my feet on the bottoms of the doorway outside the schoolroom to avoid entering. My parents were essentially agnostic at this point anyway and I think felt a little hypocritical. So, we went to a Unitarian Universalist Church many years later, which was great. Lots of homemade bars and cupcakes.

CHRIS: My dad took my sister and me to the Sai Baba temple in Hollywood every weekend. Sai Baba is said to perform miracles where he shoots this powder out of his hands. At the temple, I loved singing and the incense. I never really understood what the principles were, but it was fun. I like religion if it brings people together. Most of them are intended to do that so I say go for it.

GREG: I don't think I ever understood what religion is. If you have to ask, then maybe it isn't religion—which is weird because I'm the one writing the Biblical lyrics.

What is the most wonderful natural or outdoor experience you have had?

JOHN: My girlfriend Kay and I just went camping in Northern Minnesota. We were walking down this path and heard a crack, and we looked up to see a bald eagle with a roughly eight-foot wingspan taking off with a "whoosh" from the top of the tree. It was, by far, the biggest bird I have ever seen. We also got snorted at by these beavers. They sound kind of like pigs.

NADA PROBLEM



Nada Surf Carry That Weight Story: Steve Ciabattoni

"I'm gonna tell you, but you can't write it," Matthew Caws says earnestly of the recent rumblings in his personal life. All we can say is that it's a drama that makes any record label woe he and Nada Surf weathered years ago sound like a tea party. He's not trying to be coy about it (in fact he's been kind of a mensch), but it's drained him in almost every way, except creatively.

Amazingly, Nada Surf's brilliantly buoyant new album with the brilliantly heavy title, *The Weight Is A Gift* (Barsuk), comes off sounding like the bright, wise light at the end of a harsh tunnel. The album isn't confessional, but it is as cathartic as it is catchy. "It really would be hard to sing these songs if they weren't hooky," Caws notes. "If there wasn't a melody, or if the main driving force were just the words, then it would be hard to relieve all that. But that's the thing. You take something that's troublesome and make it rhyme and make it catchy. It serves as incredible therapy."

No track exemplifies this better than "Blankest Year." In a little more than two minutes of power-pop, it puts an exclamation point on all of Caws's complexities with the hook: "Oh, fuck it! I'm gonna have a party." The song was quickly written the night before they planned to

record. "It's not at all like the college 'I need to partaay,'" explains bassist Daniel Lorca, who has been playing with Caws for more than 15 years. "It's more like 'Matthew needs to have a party. Right now,'" he says laughing and banging his fists. "Being around the band and the process of writing and recording is by far the happiest thing I've got going," Caws says, like a man who has just been pulled out of a river by his friends. "I have to embrace the happy side really hard now."

With help from producer Chris Walla, Nada Surf adhered to a rigid ethic on *The Weight*: "We were trying to stick to the same model as 2002's *Let Go* in that there was no model and that we weren't really thinking about anything," Caws jokes, recalling the pressures the band used to put on itself when working on a major label. But those major vs. indie arguments don't really affect the thinking of a band that's been around as long as Nada Surf (they just celebrated 10 years with "new" drummer Ira Elliot). "There's a merch company we work with that can make just one shirt at a time," says Lorca. "I think I'm going to have them make a shirt that lists all the names of every label we've outlasted."



Cage Breaks Free

Interview: Daniel Levin-Becker

Arguably the most impressive thing about Cage Kennylyz, born Chris Palco, is that he's still breathing. Unwitting assistant to his father's heroin use at age six, misdiagnosed test subject for Prozac at age 17, and punching bag for uncles and step dads in between, Cage has been no stranger to abuse in all its forms. On his second solo album, and first for Definitive Jux, *Hell's Winter*, the Leak Brother, Smut Peddler and drug-addled madman shifts gears and gets real about his past.

So why the soul-baring album now?

It was either do this or stop making music. Life was completely out of control, left wing shot off, going down fast. Basically I felt I had hit a ceiling in my career. I was tired of the whole crazy thing, you know?

Yeah, crazy for crazy's sake.

I mean, everybody's pretty fucking crazy. I don't know anyone that's fucking sane. Literally, not one person. It's to the point where someone in an interview is like, "Do something crazy!" And you're just like, "Okay, how 'bout I just fuck up this whole business relationship and beat the shit out of you? That'd be pretty crazy."

Was it difficult to make?

Yeah, there was a lot of dark shit I was drawing from. I

got an itch for tragedy. It started off like, "Here's a concept: let's make a record where I try to not kill myself and, like, be happy. That's pretty funny, right?" Of course we knew some kids were gonna be like, "Oh, he's on some emo shit." It's not the first of its kind, but it's the first of *my* kind. I wasn't trying to turn heads. It was just a record I needed to make. The fact that it was able to change me is a success in itself.

Did you have any blueprint for it?

Not really. I listened to the stories on *The Great Adventures Of Slick Rick* and thought, what about *The Great Adventures Of Slick Rick In Hell*? But I just got tired of the whole battle rap thing. Who the fuck cares about that? Honestly, it's like an artist standing in front of a canvas with a million paints, spitting on you about how ridiculous his painting's gonna be, and you're like, "Where's the fucking picture?" Fuck that. I just went right into the picture.

How are the early responses?

The responses [to internet promotions and leaks] have been amazing. People say they like the record, and you're like, "Uh, that's cool... now you know a lot of things about me." [Laughs] But it's cool. The response on my MySpace music page has been nuts. I've only

been on that for like two months. I'm not really into going to rap websites and reading up on what people say about you. We call it the papachachi—the little brother to the paparazzi—and they're always after us. You didn't think it, but they're in the bushes with a fuckin' phone cam. You're out somewhere, and you get mustard or some shit on your fuckin' shirt, papachachi is right there. It's interesting to be adored and hated by anonymous people like that. But whatever keeps the kids happy, I guess.

Have you given any thought to what your next record would be like?

Are you kidding me? I think about it all the time... I feel like, now that I've gotten everything off my chest, I can make whatever record I want. The idea I have for the next record is just up and down. I want to do happy shit, but I want the happy shit to be a farce, like the fake-happy that antidepressants give you. Very manic and very depressed. Up and down, slow and fast. Yes, it sounds like sex, but then again...

What doesn't these days?

Yeah, exactly. That's how I want it: an emotional roller coaster. But the next record will be a lot more fun, I think—if your idea of fun is tragedy.

IDLEWILD

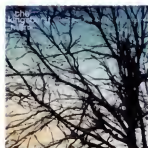
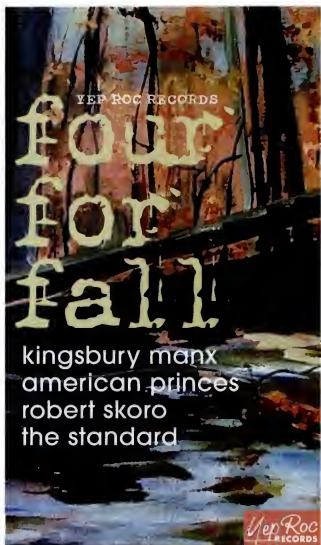


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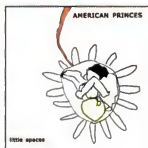


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MYSTICAL SHIT

Wooden Wand And The Vanishing Voice give a collective push and discover the politics of trancing

STORY: CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN • PHOTO: DANIEL FLASHAR

"Led Zeppelin wasn't a collective," says James Toth, leader of Wooden Wand And The Vanishing Voice. "The Kinks weren't a collective and neither are we."

Maybe it's the 11 performers leisurely undulating on their first record, or the quasi-mythical stage names (Satya Sai Jehovah, Steven The Harvester, etc.) or the rumored hitchhiking tour, or their impossibly prolific CD-R and cassette output full of semi-improvised Art Ensemble Of Chicago-meets-Grateful Dead trance-outs. "Maybe it's delusional," Toth adds, "but we consider ourselves a rock band. What we do is rock music... to us."

The other four members of the Vanishing Voice are holed up in the cramped attic space of Brooklyn's Emandee Studios, a summer sauna that gives its inhabitants a fine sweat-glaze upon entering. Clad in skimpy shorts and the smallest dress Jessica B. could find, they are lumped on the couch, attentively listening to Toth laying some whammy-bar-heavy overdubs onto a California show that had "no one there to mess up the sound." Always three albums ahead of their release schedule, they're recording their second record for SRC, *Gipsy Freedom*, a record that's more song-based for the improv-heavy band—even the songs that are 18-minutes of pastoral goo inspired by free-jazzer Daniel Carter's thematic structures. In a live setting, their hazy psych-jamming is immediately polarizing. Some people follow them from show to show and trade bootlegs on Souleek; others think they're dickin' around and decide to hand a live mic to a four-year-old. Either way, "It's the collective thing," says Jessica. "People just want to be a part of it."

The band talks amongst itself:

Jarvis Tavs: People think that if you play more free-form or improvised stuff that you won't mind if someone is yelling at you.

Jessica B.: Or you were poking at my instrument while I was playing it.

Heidi Diehl: You still have to listen to each other. I'm still working even though it might seem like I'm just jingling bells.

Toth: No one's ever jumped on the stage in a positive way.

G. Lucas Crane: Unless you consider talking on your cell phone about the Batman movie "collaborating." In some avant-European circles that could be improv. I'm sure there's probably a Braxton record out there that sounds like that.

The band talks like they improvise, listening to each other's lines, building off of them and occasionally fashioning a jumbled mess. All of them except Diehl met while attending SUNY Purchase, hanging out in the record store and the campus 16-track studio instead of going to class. They're not hitchhiking vagabonds or psychic runaways as their liner notes purport, just three guys and two girls that would rather torture cassettes and sing songs about the devil than get day jobs.

"We've been very glib up until recently," says Crane. "But with the amount of touring we've been doing, sooner or later you can't be like, 'Uh... no, he's a magical creature. No, I'm from Brazil, seeyalater.'"

There is plenty of sincerity in Toth's Lizard King lyrics and campfire exhortations as well. His DIY religious beliefs—a combo of pantheism, Christianity, Aleister Crowley, whatever—are applied to that unexplainable feeling of pure musical bliss. The one goal of the Vanishing Voice is get the audience into that "dream world" too.

"Physically it's like voodoo to me," Toth says. "Getting to that place during a set where you forget that you're playing a drum. It's intangible and if I could explain it or bottle it or write it down I wouldn't have to do music."

Vanishing Voice's dream world on any given night is a product of their immediate environment. Meeting cool people begets euphoric music. A shitty drive to a show prefaces a set that sounds like "total darkness." Lyrics written in the car reflect the towns Toth is in or the books the band reads—sometimes to each other (like reading the JonBenet Ramsey trial scripts in different accents to see if they made people sound guiltier). It's Isaac Newton's third law of physics with a flange pedal—symbolically linked to a van held together by "bubblegum and snot" that would only drive for an two hours if you let it sit for two hours.

"One of my favorite quotes is from Tom Waits, something to the effect of 'Whatever you absorb, you eventually secrete,'" says Toth, who refused to buy a van with a TV in the back, even if they had it removed. "That's why, when bad music comes on in the car, you gotta turn it off. You never know when you'll be writing a song and some Wings melody will come out of nowhere." **NMM**

Mr. Mi\$ery

Her Space Holiday wasn't trying making a fortune from misfortune, so he's sacked the selfish sadsack for some Jigga-lovin' vigor.

STORY: JOE MARTIN • PHOTO: AUBREY EDWARDS

"The first day I got there, I had a full can of Coke thrown at me," says **Her Space Holiday** mastermind Marc Bianchi, fondly remembering his brief move from Austin to non-urban Rocklin, California, in early 2005. "I was wearing a furlined women's jacket, but I was dressed like a boy."

He stops to think.

"I didn't understand what the problem was!"

The line feels more like a punchline than a complaint, but Bianchi knows that this is his modus operandi. He calls it "the slow build," a constant personal revision of how to deal with life's problems with as much grace as possible, and it hasn't been the easiest mindset to maintain. As a solo act, this songwriter is as insecure as they come, more than willing to dismiss the fan-winning solipsism and "embarrassingly personal" lyrics of his old records with an audible head-shake. On *The Past Presents The Future* (Wichita-World's Fair), he even lashes out at his whole public persona, rewriting the thrust of Soul Asylum's "Misery" for the LiveJournaling lap-pop set ("Missed Medicine"). With its accusatory vibe and industry-encompassing chorus, which goes, "Let's all exploit our misery," the song presents Bianchi's penchant for scathing self-criticism in all its masochistic glory.

"I had a tendency to make my music so self-absorbed," he says. "In Europe, I would get a lot of press about how I'm making a business out of misery. I thought, fuck, that's hilarious. I could be doing that and I wouldn't even realize it. For people who write or paint or make music, that's commonplace for a certain period of their lives—just sitting in their own shit because it's warm."

Bianchi clarifies. "The way I used to write lyrics, I wasn't looking at what I should have learned from experience. I just focused on what the emotion of the thing was. It was kind of short-sighted."

Short-sighted, maybe. But Bianchi's morose, painfully clever portrait of his synth- and string-laden headspace officially hit a nerve in 2003, when his relationship with longtime Holiday partner Keely Chanteloup went up in flames and *The Young Machines* (Mush) was cobbled from the ashes. Bewilderingly sassy and heartbreak-

ing, *Machines* somehow bobbed over the radar and near the top of the college radio music charts, leaving Bianchi with an uncomfortably high profile and a guilty conscience.

"What I've always done wrong is that I take experiences in my life and make private things public," he says, with a sigh. "I have no right to put other people or their situations out there. I was trying to come to terms with my breakup and other things, like infatuations, and [*Machines*] was a tool to do that. But I couldn't see, until hindsight, that I'd really made an ugly, ugly record. The lyrics were really dark. People gravitated toward that. But I want to detach myself from it."

Neither content to wax emotronic nor rehash *Machines'* navel-gazing soup, the wistful *Future* is, on some level, a triumph of page-turning detachment for Bianchi—an ushering of a new era. Rather than stuff an album full of torn diary entries, he's twisted his lyrics into "parables," switching into the third-person and indulging in narrative gender swaps. Hip-hop-flavored beats, the result of a nascent Jay-Z obsession—"[He] was the biggest influence, hands down"—pock the usually laidback cut-and-paste landscape. (So much so, in fact, that Bianchi recently started pressing DJ-only vinyl with his non-profit label, Money Fight.) The album still oozes melancholy, but there's hope at last. The sweet sound of the songwriter's "slow build" finally approximates the mountain of wisdom he'd like it to be.

"We all have this defense mechanism," he says. "This fight-or-flight thing where, even if we don't say it verbally, we all think we're a victim of circumstance. But we are so responsible for what we do leading up to the position where we're at. The interesting thing about hip-hop, to me, is that 'the grind' is part of the culture. This is what I need to do to survive, this is what I need creatively. It's inspiring."

Bianchi pauses and puts it all into perspective. "If this record totally fucking tanks, it will still be the biggest success of anything I've ever done in my entire life. I really feel, for the first time, that I'm at peace. I wrote it as if, potentially, this was the last thing I was going to say to myself or my family or the people listening. What note do I want to leave it on?" **MMH**





Men Or Mice?

Prolific rhymeslinger **MF Doom** and beat bandito **Danger Mouse** have tag-teamed with Adult Swim for one hell of a cartoon concept album. Grab your decoder ring and dig into this Saturday morning romp.

STORY: OWEN STROCK • PHOTO: B+

Airport security is a bitch these days. You know it's a new era when world-renowned microphone maniac MF Doom can't get on a plane because of his metal mask. Gwar never caught that kind of heat! The metal-faced motemouth was en route to a press junket, promoting Dangerdoom, his collaboration with super-producer Danger Mouse. The fruits of their labor, *The Mouse And The Mask* (Epitaph), is a dream team alley-oop of late-night misfits popping shots, dropping freestyles and clattering answering machines. Though Doom couldn't make it in person, he's a resourceful dude, showing up live-via-speakerphone to hold a pleasant fireside chat next to the modest Mouse. It was like something out of *Inspector Gadget*, with Doom playing the role of Claw and Danger Mouse stepping in as his trusty, uh, cat. Or whatever.

So when you guys were in the studio with Meatwad, getting blitzed or whatever, did you ever get the munchies and just want to eat him?

Doom: [Laughs] When it comes to that dude, you probably wouldn't even want to put your hand on him, your face, nuttin'! Stay at least three, four feet away from him, you know what I mean? Word!

Are you guys getting featured on Adult Swim?

Doom: We're putting together a petition now! You can get on that, too, if you're with it, man.

Danger: If the fans demand it, we'll see what happens

Danger Mouse, who gets more chicks? The Gorillaz or the Aqua Teen dudes?

Doom: [Laughs] Under pressure, kid!

Danger: I don't know man.

C'mon, blow up some spots.

Danger: The Gorillaz are more like rock stars. They definitely get a little bit more of that. Murdoc and 2D, they definitely do. They're rock stars, what are you gonna do? Movie guys, TV guys do OK, but the rock stars always get it in the end.

Who wilds out more?

Danger: Probably the Aqua Teen dudes.

Doom: Dude, I gotta get out more!

Danger: You gotta come to Hollywood.

If you could wife one animated chick, who would you choose?

Doom: Ooh, I would say Leela. I always had a crush on Leela. The one-eyed freak girl from *Futurama*. She's got the boobs on her, you know what I'm saying?

Danger: I was going to say Jessica Rabbit, but that's the easy answer. I'm a meat-and-potatoes guy.

Both you dudes are big on partnering. Does working with other people help you come up with ideas?

Danger: For me, I wouldn't like the music if there wasn't someone else on it. I wouldn't have much fun listening to it on my own. Plus I've got a lot to learn before I do a record on my own right now, just musically.

Doom: Totally, it's definitely like that. Holmes. You know I'm a producer myself, so most of the time I'm doing both. It gets kind of like lonely. So you know, me and Danger, we go out, kick it. It's like hooking up with a friend with a mutual way of thinking. It's like I'm trying to get the snare right, then he calls me like, "Yo, I'm uptown, let's meet up." "Blao! I'll be right there." We working, but we having fun.

Doom, people have been saying you're spreading yourself thin.

Doom: Ah, dun!

What do you have to say to all the haters?

Doom: You know what it is, I'm going to cream them. If someone's gonna come up with something better, then bring it! But you gotta get used to my voice. I'll tell you that right now! I'm spreading myself thin, huh? Pound for pound them others can't come with the lyrics like that. If anyone can, put 'em up then. Put 'em up! Nobody can't really do that, though! I'm like whoever get bored with it, fine, it's not for you. The record's not for everybody. But if you like rhymes, you like pretty good jokes, stuff like that, then it's us.

Danger: Well it's a simple thing. Nobody is doing anything that anybody is paying as much attention to as this. How quickly this record has leaked is crazy. People just want more. It's like you can't satisfy people.

Doom: We just trying to offer something a little different from the norm. If you get tired of it, go back to the norm. **MM**

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 



The Rules Of Fite Club

Hip-hopper-turned-sample-rocker
Tim Fite says: Always replenish your
blood supply, never clear your samples
and never spend more than a buck.

STORY: KORY GROW • PHOTO: SHAWN ENYART

"Hi, everybody," says a dark-haired man dressed in a pinstripe suit, a wicked stare and a slouch to match. "I'm Tim Fite, and I was born without blood." While this quizzical, Johnny Cash-like salutation gets only scattered applause at New York cabaret Joe's Pub, the herky-jerky singer is soon enchanting the crowd with *Sesame Street* antics such as asking the audience to help count fingers with him and telling a wild story about "the gentleman with itchy legs" (actually Fite, projected on a TV behind him), all in between Fite's wild-eyed potpourri of country, hip-hop and rock. After his 20-minute opening slot is up, the crowd is cheering for an encore. The exhausted singer okays another tune with the club, turns down his "blood machine" (an oversized boombox made of wood) and sings a touching rendition of his own "If You Please," which may surface someday on a collection of love songs. The thing about Fite's instant success is that it's really instantaneous: this is his first solo show.

Fite had a brief stint in an early-'00s major label hip-hop duo, which he now denounces as "shameful" and refuses to identify (although a cursory Googling reveals the truth). Now Fite has taken what he learned from hip-hop, notably sampling, and reinvented rock music from the bottom up—literally.

Seated at a dinner table in his Brooklyn apartment between painted urinals, modified toilet bowls and the occasional folded-up wheelchair, Fite twitches his eyebrows while explaining how he bought "bargain bin" CDs for the source material on his debut, *Gone Ain't Gone* (Anti-). Since he conceptualized his collage-rock process, he has bought up to 600 CDs, some for as little as a quarter. "I won't pay more than a dollar for anything to sample from. That's just not right," he says. "Sometimes I find CDs that I like so much, I can't sample them because it's so good. It's tough, because when you hear a good song, you like the good song. I'm looking for the good songs inside the good songs."

When Fite self-released the album, he didn't contact any of these dollar-bin dropouts, scribbling on the booklet, "Thank you for not pressing charges." But his new label, Anti-, insisted they clear the samples (in addition to keeping his thank you note). This became a daunting task for the label, accustomed to calling the majors, and now seeking contact with whozas, couldabears and WTFs like Tim Ferguson And The Cousin Lovers or Trunk Federation.

"Business wastes a lot of people's time, and the bargain bin is the result," says Fite. "It's like, 'We printed too many of these CDs,' or 'The band wasn't good enough for our marketing plan,' or 'Our marketing plan wasn't good enough for this band.' Which is what I find a lot because there's a lot of great music in the bargain bin."

With the exception of one semi-known Nordic singer—whose identity is another Fite Club secret—all samples were cleared. For that song, based around a two-note riff ("There's only so many ways you can strum two chords in a slow-ass song"), Fite tapped friends Ben Kweller and Bonfire Madigan cellist Shive to fill it out, making it more—as Fite puts it, hitting his fist on his chest—"from the corazon."

Recently, in some act of cosmic irony, Fite saw his former band's album selling for half a penny on eBay, which bothered him only slightly. "You'd have to find another fucking CD to buy for a half a cent to actually pay for it with a check," he says, lurching forward. "It's beautiful to go to the bargain bin and rise from it like a phoenix, and then return to it most likely. I have the feeling Tim Fite will most likely find the bargain bin at some point. I can only dream."

But until he swan dives back into the company of his peers, he's at least had enough time at the bottom to reevaluate his motivations. His born-without-blood shick and blood-and-bullets imagery represent what he feels are people's misspent inspirations. "No Good Here"—on which Fite samples forgotten Richmond college rockers the Seymores' "Arcade Boy" note-for-note, keeping the vocal melody and pumping blood into new lyrics—captures this theme. He sings about quitting every job in New York City and how his money just doesn't seem accepted anywhere. But within the psychology of Tim Fite, even if his money's not accepted, it's not the end. He just needs to refuel on motivation and conviction. That way, it's not really gone; hence, *Gone Ain't Gone*. Having been relegated to the bargain bin only to start fresh with a new identity (Tim Fite is a pseudonym), the boy born without blood, it seems, has gotten a transfusion.

"Not many songs get a second chance," he says, making a tidy metaphor for his own career. "Not many songs get a first chance, for Christ's sake." **MMH**

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 



WE'RE HUNG UP

THE VOTES ARE IN*



IDLEWILD
Warning/Promises
(Capitol)



DANGERDOOM
The Mouse And The Mask
(Epitaph)



BLACKALICIOUS
The Craft (Epitaph)



DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE
Plans (Atlantic)

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CD Central
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Criminal Records
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Atlanta, GA 30307

Culture Clash
3301 W. Central Ave. #9E
Toledo, OH 43606

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Long Beach, CA 90803

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Ogden, UT 84403
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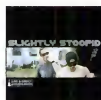
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13. Kola Koca Death Squad "Rising Son" (Wife Records)
14. Ashton Allen "Better Than I Know" (Livewire Recordings)
15. Glovebox "In The End" (Baria Records)
16. Lori "One Zero Zero" (Wife Records)
17. Kelpie "Add Orable Ord" (Birthday Party Records)
18. The Relief Effort "At Your Mercy" (St. Helena Records)
19. Sparkydog "Radiowave" (Sdog Records)
20. The East Village Opera Company "La Donna E Mobile" (Universal Classics)

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TW	LW	ZW	PK	WKS	ARTIST + TITLE	LABEL
1	1	1	1	7	SURFAN STEVENS Illinois	Asthmatic Kitty
2	2	3	2	5	IDLEWILD Warnings/Promises	Capitol
3	3	5	3	5	XIU XIU La Foret	SRG
4	4	6	4	5	BDB MOULD Body Of Song	Yep Roc
5	5	16	5	3	FRUIT BATS Spelled In Bones	Sub Pop
6	11	50	6	3	DUNGEN Ta De Lugnt	Kameado
7	12	13	1	21	BECK Gato	Interscope
8	7	9	7	6	KINSKI Alpine Static	Sub Pop
9	6	2	1	10	WHITE STRIPES Get Behind Me Satan	V2
10	9	8	7	6	WOLF PARADE Wolf Parade [EP]	Sub Pop
11	106	—	11	2	SDNS AND DAUGHTERS The Repulsion Box	Domino
12	8	4	4	7	FRANK BLACK Honeycomb	Back Porch
13	24	—	13	2	BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB Howl	RCA
14	10	7	2	13	GORILLAZ Demon Days	Virgin
15	27	—	15	2	FREE DESIGN The Now Sound Redesigned	Light In The Attic
16	14	26	14	4	PELICAN The Fire In Our Throats Will Beckon The Thaw	Hydra Head
17	16	15	15	6	JUAN MACLEAN Less Than Human	DFA-Astralwerks
18	26	15	18	3	FOUNTAINS OF WAYNE Out-Of-State Plates	Virgin
19	15	18	15	7	SON VOLT Dream And The Melody Of Riot	Transmit Sounds-Legacy
20	196	—	20	2	GOGOL BORDELLO Gypsy Punks: Underdog	Side One Dummy
21	—	21	1	1	MINUS THE BEAR Meros El Oso	Suicide Squeeze
22	36	49	22	3	RUFIO The Comfort Of Home	Nitro
23	13	12	12	8	BRIAN ENO Another Day On Earth	Rykodisc
24	33	51	24	3	ORANGE JUICE The Glasgow School	Domino
25	17	17	10	8	LALI PUNA I Thought I Was Over That: Rare, Remixed...	Morr
26	26	33	26	5	CONCRETES Layabout/leavedown	Astralwerks
27	35	36	27	5	KOUSHIK Be With	Stones Throw
28	42	—	28	2	DRENDA FINK Invisble Ones	Saddle Creek
29	—	29	1	1	CURSIVE The Difference Between Houses And...	Saddle Creek
30	56	—	30	2	SILVERSTEIN Discovering The Waterfront	Victory
31	170	—	31	2	RICHARD HELL Spurts: The Richard Hell Story	Rhino
32	16	24	16	6	HEAVENLY STATES Black Comet	Berie
33	19	14	1	1	SLEATER-KINNEY The Woods	Sub Pop
34	52	—	34	2	PENNYWISE The Fuse	Epitaph
35	48	81	35	3	BLOODY HOLLIES If Footmen Tire You...	Alive
36	51	55	36	4	NICKEL CREEK Why Should The Fire Die?	Sugar Hill
37	20	19	19	7	MAYDAY Bushido Karaoke	Saddle Creek
38	30	29	29	4	STELLASTARR Selections From Harmonies For The Haunted	RCA
39	34	42	34	4	RDYKSDPP The Understanding	Astralwerks
40	21	38	21	5	HOCKEY NIGHT Keep Guessin'	Lookout!
41	—	41	1	1	MOBBIUS BAND The Loving Sounds Of Static	Ghostly International
42	31	25	5	12	FOUR TET Everything Ecstatic	Domino
43	29	20	20	6	JUNIOR VARSITY Wide Eyed	Victory
44	25	11	3	11	COLDPLAY X And Y	Capitol
45	32	31	31	4	PAJO Papo	Drag City
46	37	37	30	7	POSIES Every Kind Of Light	Rykodisc
47	—	47	1	1	NEW PORNOGRAPHERS Twin Cinema	Matador
48	22	18	18	8	FUNERAL FOR A FRIEND Hours	Atlantic
49	49	109	49	3	MINDTAUR SHOCK Maritime	4AD
50	40	39	39	8	DREDC Catch Without Arms	Interscope

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51	38	172	38	3	MADNESS The Dangerous Sessions, Vol. 1	V2
52	45	21	1	19	SPOON Gimme Fiction	Merge
53	44	23	4	13	STEPHEN MALKMU Face The Truth	Matador
54	58	53	53	3	PDX POP NOW! 2005 Various Artists	Self-Released
55	—	55	1	1	KOUFAX Hard Times Are In Fashion	Doghouse
56	57	58	56	4	KITE OPERATIONS Dandelion Day	KDA
57	47	22	6	12	DRESSY BESSY Electrified	Transdreamer
58	55	64	55	4	MAZARIN We're Already There	I And Ear
59	65	65	59	4	DENISON WITHER Are You A Dreamer?	Milidia Group
60	23	10	9	10	DROPPICK MURPHYS The Warrior's Code	Helicat
61	54	58	26	9	A BAND OF BEES Free The Bees	Astralwerks
62	50	27	27	7	TRANSPLANTS Haunted Cities	Atlantic
63	71	—	63	2	GREENHORNS East Grand Blues [EP]	Prize Brigade-V2
64	151	—	64	2	HOLOPAW Out And/Or Fight	Sub Pop
65	69	67	65	4	LIFF AND TIMES Suburban Hymns	DeSoto
66	74	—	66	2	BOYS NIGHT OUT Trainwreck	Ferret
67	39	54	39	4	ABERDEEN CITY Sixty Lives [EP]	Dovecot
68	80	174	68	3	KIDG66 Resilience	Tigerbeats
69	53	61	43	8	SIX FEET UNDER: EVERYTHING ENDS Soundtrack	Astralwerks
70	61	100	61	4	FELT Felt 2: A Tribute To Lisa Bonet	Rhymesayers
71	73	69	69	5	DAPHNE LOVES DERBY On The Strength Of All Convinced	Outskirts
72	41	30	10	11	TEENAGE FANCLUB Man-Made	Merge
73	46	40	32	6	DAEDELUS Exquisite Corpse	Mush
74	163	—	74	2	DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE "Soul Meets Body" [Single]	Atlantic
75	82	71	71	5	JAMISON PARKER Sleepwalker	Interscope
76	87	83	66	7	WILLIE NELSON Countryman	Lost Highway
77	86	45	21	12	COMMON Be	Geffen
78	77	91	77	5	BEFORE BRAILLE Tired Of Not Being Away...	Sunset Alliance
79	43	57	43	5	JIM YOSHII PILE-UP Picks Us Apart	Absolutely Kosher
80	84	111	80	4	YERBA BUENA Island Life	Razor And Tie
81	134	—	81	2	BRIAN JONESTOWN MASSACRE We Are The Radio... [EP]	Tee Pee
82	63	52	52	5	101ERS Elgin Avenue Breakdown Revisited	Astralwerks
83	76	56	56	7	CKY An Answer Can Be Found	Island
84	109	100	94	3	TARTUFI So We Are Alive	Threed
85	83	43	43	6	ESTHERO Wicked Lil' Gmrs	Reprise
86	62	61	61	4	GRAVY TRAIN! Are You Wigglin'?	Kill Rock Stars
87	78	97	78	3	HARD-FI Cash Machine [EP]	Vica
88	70	74	70	4	GET HIM EAT HIM Geography Cones	Absolutely Kosher
89	59	46	37	9	FINCH Say Hello To Sunshine	Drive-Thru
90	67	34	9	10	AQUABATS! Charge!!	Nitro
91	—	91	1	1	DIMENSION MIX: THE MUSIC OF... Various Artists	Ennie Meenie
92	64	44	25	8	SKELETONS AND THE GIRL-FACED... Git	Ghostly International
93	—	93	1	1	TRAUMSCHMIEDE Blattnig Pop	Mute
94	144	—	94	2	SILVERSN PICKUPS Pitul [EP]	Dangerbird
95	—	95	1	1	SPILL CANVAS One Fall Swoop	One Eleven
96	95	93	71	7	GIARFES The Giraffes	Razor And Tie
97	72	32	32	7	WORLD LEADER PRETEND Punches	Warner Bros.
98	68	62	62	5	CAPEX Taste [EP]	Hard Soul
99	130	119	60	7	REAL TUESDAY WELD The Return Of The...	Six Degrees
100	93	47	10	12	ALKALINE TRIO Crimson	Vagrant

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3	1	OANE COOK Retaliation (34)	Comedy Central
4	3	COLOPLAY X And Y (74786)	Capitol
5	54	BRONSON ARROYO Covering The Bases (69000)	Asylum
6	2	YOUNG JEEZY Let's Get It: Thug Motivation 101 (442110)	Def Jam
7	—	NICKEL CREEK Why Should The Fire Die? (3990)	Sugar Hill
8	5	SUFJAN STEVENS Illinois (14)	Asthmatic Kitty
9	6	BLACK EYED PEAS Monkey Business (434102)	A&M
10	8	WHITE STRIPES Get Behind Me Satan (27256) ●	V2
11	6	FOO FIGHTERS In Your Honor (68038)	RCA
12	7	MARIAH CAREY Emancipation Of Mimi (394302)	Island
13	10	JACK JOHNSON In Between Dreams (414902)	Brushfire-Universal
14	—	CLICK FIVE Greetings From Imrie House (53826)	Lavo
15	19	FALL OUT BOY From Under The Cork Tree (414002) ●	Reprise
16	20	GREEN DAY American Idiot (48777)	Reprise
17	—	CHIMAIRA Chimaera (618262)	Roadrunner
18	15	KILLERS Hot Fuss (84571)	Island
19	13	MIKE JONES Who Is Mike Jones? (49340)	Warner Bros.
20	14	SYSTEM OF A DOWN Mezzanotte (90648)	Columbia
21	—	PENNYWISE The Fuse (86769)	Epitaph
22	—	RICHARD THOMPSON Front Parlour Ballads (4725)	Cooking Vinyl
23	29	CLAP YOUR HANOS SAY YEAH Clap Your... (264942)	Self-Released
24	—	PROOF Searching For Jerry Garcia (60297)	Iron Fist
25	—	CURSIVE The Difference Between Houses And Homes... (70)	Saddle Creek
26	24	BECK Guero (348102)	Interscope
27	16	COMMON Be (467002)	Geffen
28	22	HUSTLE AND FLOW Soundtrack (83822)	Atlantic
29	11	JASON MRAZ Mr. A-Z (83833) ●	Elektra
30	28	AUDIOSLAVE Out Of Exile (463002)	Interscope
31	33	YING YANG TWINS United State Of Atlanta (2520)	TVT
32	—	TOMMY LEE Tommyland: The Ride (5)	Rocket Science
33	23	NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL MUSIC! 19 Various Artists (12133)	Capitol
34	35	GWEN STEFANI Love, Angel, Music, Baby (346902)	Interscope
35	12	DOPEGAME 2 (127)	Sunday
36	30	ALL-AMERICAN REJECTS Move Along (479102) ●	Interscope
37	46	BLOC PARTY Silent Alarm (93815)	Dim Mak-Vice
38	21	R. KELLY TP3 Reloaded (70214)	Jive
39	41	MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE Three Cheers For Sweet... (48615)	Reprise
40	42	MATISYAHU Live At Stubbs: Austin, TX 2/19/05 (80502) ●	Or
41	25	MISSY ELLIOTT The Cookbook (83779) ●	Atlantic
42	36	OUNGEN Ta Det Lugnt (16)	Kemado
43	63	LEELA JAMES A Change Is Gonna Come (48027) ●	Warner Bros.
44	49	WEEZER Make Believe (452012)	Geffen-Interscope
45	17	FATHI HILL Fireflies (48794)	Warner Bros.
46	44	KELLY CLARKSON Breakaway (64491)	RCA
47	18	TEAIRRA MARI Roc-A-Fella Presents... (452602)	Roc-A-Fella-Def Jam
48	31	WILLIE NELSON Countryman (470602)	Lost Highway
49	—	ORANGE JUICE The Glasgow School (54)	Omnino
50	26	SLIM THUG Already Platinum (350502) ●	Geffen

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1	—	STAINO Chapter V (62982)	Elektra
2	40	BRONSON ARROYO Covering The Bases (69000)	Asylum
3	1	YOUNG JEEZY Let's Get It: Thug Motivation 101 (442110)	Def Jam
4	3	MIKE JONES Who Is Mike Jones? (49340)	Warner Bros.
5	4	GORILLAZ Demon Days (73838)	Virgin
6	2	DOPEGAME 2 (127)	Sunday
7	6	OANE COOK Retaliation (34)	Comedy Central
8	5	MARIAH CAREY Emancipation Of Mimi (394302)	Island
9	14	BLACK EYED PEAS Monkey Business (434102)	A&M
10	—	CHIMAIRA Chimaera (618262)	Roadrunner
11	1	SYSTEM OF A DOWN Mezzanotte (90648)	Columbia
12	11	COLDPLAY X And Y (74786)	Capitol
13	15	FALL OUT BOY From Under The Cork Tree (414002)	Island
14	21	YING YANG TWINS United State Of Atlanta (2520)	TVT
15	7	HUSTLE AND FLOW Soundtrack (83822)	Atlantic
16	18	GREEN DAY American Idiot (48777)	Reprise
17	29	CYPHILIS Manifest	Self-Released
18	10	FOO FIGHTERS In Your Honor (68038)	RCA
19	—	PROOF Searching For Jerry Garcia (60297)	Iron Fist
20	36	WHITE STRIPES Get Behind Me Satan (27256)	V2
21	—	NICKEL CREEK Why Should The Fire Die? (3990)	Sugar Hill
22	43	KILLERS Hot Fuss (84571)	Island
23	32	MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE Three Cheers For Sweet Revenge (48615)	Reprise
24	30	JACK JOHNSON In Between Dreams (414902)	Brushfire-Universal
25	28	ALL-AMERICAN REJECTS Move Along (479102)	Interscope

A.I.M.S.

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PIECES COUNTS OF ALL ALLIANCE OF INDEPENDENT
MUSIC STORE MEMBERS
PERIOD ENDING 8/16/2005
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TW	LW	ARTIST + TITLE	LABEL
1	—	TOMMY LEE Tommyland: The Ride (5)	Rocket Science
2	2	SUFJAN STEVENS Illinois (14)	Asthmatic Kitty
3	4	CLAP YOUR HANOS SAY YEAH Clap Your Hands Say Yeah (264942)	Self-Released
4	5	FRUIT BATS Spilled In Bones (654)	Sub Pop
5	8	OUNGEN Ta Det Lugnt (16)	Kemado
6	9	GORILLAZ Demon Days (73838)	Virgin
7	—	CURSIVE The Difference Between Houses And Homes... (70)	Saddle Creek
8	—	COLDPLAY X And Y (74786)	Capitol
9	—	NICKEL CREEK Why Should The Fire Die? (3990)	Sugar Hill
10	6	BOB MOULD Body Of Song (2091)	Yep Roc
11	12	PELICAN The Fire In Our Throats Will Beckon The Thaw (62242)	Hydra Head
12	18	WHITE STRIPES Get Behind Me Satan (27256)	V2
13	13	ROYKSOP The Understanding (11386)	Astralwerks
14	—	OANE COOK Retaliation (34)	Comedy Central
15	3	YOUNG JEEZY Let's Get It: Thug Motivation 101 (442110)	Def Jam
16	—	STAINO Chapter V (62982)	Elektra
17	—	HOLLOPAW Quit And/Or Fight (639)	Sub Pop
18	21	GREEN DAY American Idiot (48777)	Reprise
19	48	LEELA JAMES A Change Is Gonna Come (48027)	Warner Bros.
20	34	JACK JOHNSON In Between Dreams (414902)	Brushfire-Universal
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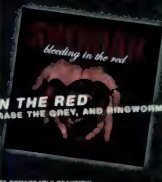
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With art, commerce and major-label pressure swirling all around, **THE SUN** are reminded that the world revolves around Columbus, Ohio.

STORY: STEVEN CHEN

IMAGE: WILL FUGMAN AND SHAWN M. FOSTER

The thing doesn't look like much from the ground, but a hundred feet up, squinting down the length of a massive yellow and pink slide, it's hard not to feel a preadolescent rush. All around, kids are shoving off on their burlap bags, gleefully into oblivion, though one 25-year-old kid hasn't budged. He's still standing at the precipice, shrugging back at me.

Chris Burney doesn't look at all like what he's supposed to: the lead singer of a stylish and catchy major-label "indie" band who has toured with the Flaming Lips and Hot Hot Heat. He refers to himself, on the song "Waiting On High," as an "attention-starved whore" and a "pathetic little hipster." On his head is a khaki fedora, which, together with his thick-framed glasses, white, long-sleeved button-down shirt and brown shorts, makes him look like one of the locals from *Our Town*. For the time being, antibiotics require that he stay out of direct sunlight; hence, the hat and long sleeves on this hot summer day.

In the throes of his music, however, Burney is every bit the vigorous frontman of the Sun, a high-energy five-piece from Columbus, Ohio, with an uncanny knack for finely tuned garage rock and full-force pop. The band is on the verge of an industry first: for their debut full-length, *Blame It On The Youth*, Warner Bros. is releasing a souped-up DVD (with burnable audio files embedded in the disc) instead of a CD, featuring videos of all 14 songs. Although 50 Cent may have a one-week jump on the concept of a DVD album (his record, *The Massacre*, is being repackaged as a DVD), Burney and Co. will be the first to take the leap sans CD. Also, *Youth* won't be the typical live performances interspersed with bad acting. One is a cartoon, another zooms in on people's faces while they masturbate, and a third follows a psychotic bride as she falls in love with and murders each member of the band.

Back at the top of the slide, we give a quick push and submit to gravity, sliding much faster because we're three times the size of everyone else. Later, high above on the gondola, Burney points to a cluster of whirling, daredevil rides that we'd somehow missed. "Oh, there are the grownup rides," he says.

It's not just that it's a Midwestern thing to do. For Burney, visiting the Ohio State Fair means something important in the broader scheme. He believes firmly in the purity of local culture and in communities banding together through whatever means available—local politics, for one—to fight corporate greed and homogenization.

"You go through this whole field of small towns, where there's nothing but rural Catholics, and then small towns of Christian communities, and even some Methodists and Amish up near Pennsylvania," he says so softly that it's necessary to lean in. "It's just this very interesting place where, as a place, it could unify itself somehow, possibly, one day, and be like, 'Oh wait, there's hope, there's a shit ton of hope in Ohio.' For all the problems, it could be a really amazing place one day, when

it starts taking care of itself better. Not letting the big money interests get it down."

In a way, the Ohio State Fair, one of the largest in the country (drawing a million or so people each year), is a fitting depiction, with sponsors ranging from Coca-Cola and T-Mobile to the Ohio Farm Bureau and Schmidt's Restaurant and Sausage Haus. "It's been going on for 152 years," Burney says. "It's every fair you've ever been to as a kid times a thousand. It's just great. It makes you feel like a kid." Drummer and co-songwriter Sam Brown describes it simply as "a giant hickey." One of the fair's main attractions this year is a life-sized butter sculpture of a cow, a calf, a child and a giant ice-cream cone.

Yet unlike the other four members of the Sun, Burney, who has lived in Cleveland, St. Louis and Cheyenne, Wyoming, stops short of calling Columbus his home. "I'm kind of rootless," he explains. At the moment, he doesn't even have a place there (or anywhere), or a cell phone, and has been making do by crashing at the apartments of bandmates and friends. If you'd asked him the day before where he planned to sleep that night, he would've shrugged. And if you ask him where he keeps his stuff, he'll just say, "I don't have a lot of stuff." In fact, Burney has only been back in town for less than 24 hours. Over the past several weeks and a good chunk of the summer, he's been in St. Louis, visiting relatives and clearing his mind. It has something to do with the pressure of major-label commitments and possibly a girl. Meanwhile, the rest of the band has likewise been doing very little around town in the months leading up to the release of *Youth*.

"It's kind of like summer vacation," says keyboardist and guitarist Brad Caulkins, looking very comfortable in sandals on the dusty front porch of the old house known affectionately around Columbus music circles as "the Tropicana." He shares it with Brad Forsblom, the Sun's bassist, who also goes by "Bobby" to avoid confusion (his actual name is Robert Bradford Forsblom). Guitarist Bryan Arendt lives with his girlfriend and his basset hound, Miles, in an apartment complex connected to the Tropicana.

The neighborhood is quiet and green, and lined with old, rickety houses, although recently, a convicted rapist hanged himself across the street. Around the corner is an inconspicuous stretch comprised of nondescript stores, a popular lesbian bar and the default hipster dive, Café Bourbon Street, where they serve Taco Ninja tacos and local bands play low-key shows. It's also where Caulkins bartends. On a typical night at Bourbon Street, it's not difficult at all to imagine that you're in Brooklyn or Oakland.

For Brown, it's been a warm and easy summer as well. "It's been awesome. It's head-clearing, man," he says, grinning.

At 29 and 33, respectively, Caulkins and Brown are the Sun's oldest members, each having pulled off substantial stints in previous groups; Caulkins played

ARTIST APPEARS ON THIS MONTH'S 

The image is a promotional poster for the movie 'The Invention of Solitude'. It features five men in dark suits and ties, each riding a bicycle. They are arranged in two rows: the top row shows the men from the chest up, and the bottom row shows them from the waist up. The background is a dark, textured blue. The title 'CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE' is written in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image, with 'CENTER' and 'OF THE' on the top line and 'UNIVERSE' on the bottom line. The man on the far left in the top row has a surprised expression with his mouth open. The man in the center of the top row wears glasses and has a serious expression. The man on the far right in the top row is looking towards the camera. The man on the far left in the bottom row also has a surprised expression. The man in the center of the bottom row wears glasses and has a serious expression. The man on the far right in the bottom row is looking towards the camera.

CENTER

OF THE

UNIVERSE



“You have to actually write a shit ton in order to get something good.”

in one called Monster Zero, and Brown was in one of Columbus's bigger mid-'90s bands, Gaunt, and still performs occasionally with the New Bomb Turks, another local fixture. Both were featured in a 1995 *Entertainment Weekly* spread that called out Columbus as the next Seattle, and both calmly watched the moment pass. Caulkins, who has lived in Columbus his entire life, says of the hype, “That stuff never happens. You can’t predict that stuff. There’s always good music here. Every weekend you could probably see a good local band.” They’ve toured through almost every state in the country and are by far the most talkative and articulate members of the band—the older brothers, the ones with perspective on the whole Columbus scene and wisdom to impart, most of it optimistic.

Brown, who wrote five of the songs on the new album, agrees. “It’s funny because in the early-’90s, lo-fi was the Columbus thing. If there was a Columbus sound, it was trashy four-track stuff, and now because of technology, anybody can make a decent recording,” he says. “You could even say the songwriting has gotten better over the last 10 years. It wasn’t just that they were great songs recorded shilly. They were kind of shitty songs recorded shitty. Now they’re good songs recorded well and it’s definitely grown and it’s definitely sounding better than it used to.”

Brown moved to Columbus from a nearby town called Bucyrus about 14 years ago, not intending to stay in Ohio forever, but never finding the chance to leave either. “I didn’t leave in time. I meant to leave, but I just put roots here,” he explains. “I didn’t mean to be here this long!” Not that he’s really upset about it. Brown lives with his wife and four-year-old son, whom he’s been teaching the drums to and letting warm up before Sun shows, much to the delight of audiences. Last year, he and a friend opened a coffee shop called Yeah, Me Too (named after the Gaunt album), and already, Columbus’s alternative weekly, *Columbus Alive*, has hailed his the best ice coffee in town, though he’s reluctant to advertise that honor. The way he sees it, it’s better to grow naturally.

“I think it’s just a preferred method for everything, rather than force yourself upon things,” Brown says, talking about more than just coffee. “For people—let them discover you.”

And that’s the paradox: How did this “indie” band end up on a major label without ever having served time on an indie? When Burney was a freshman at Ohio State University, he called indie-folk rocker Tim Easton to see about playing upright bass on his tour. Easton took him on, and after Burney dropped out of college, he joined Easton on the road, even following him out to L.A. where he met Wilco’s Jay Bennett, who also contributed to Easton’s backing band. While opening for notables like Cowboy Junkies and John Hiatt, Burney grew into his own by taking cues from Easton.

“Tim’s kind of like who I learned songwriting from,” Burney says. “I’d been writing for a long time when I was a kid or whatever and through Tim, I kinda saw how he wrote and his process. I was like, oh wait, you have to read a lot. You have to actually write a shit ton in order to get something good.”

Part of it, Easton says, was just learning to play his songs. “[Burney] definitely watched me work out songs and learned to play my songs. I think in any case, when you learn someone else’s songs, you’re learning songwriting ‘cause he learned Hank Williams songs, too, and he learned some modern stuff.” Easton praises Burney for studying music’s past in an era when a lot of bands don’t. “Lose Your Money,” on the new album, for instance, borrows a good deal from blues greats Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Easton says. He also mentions that the two of them spent quite a bit of time learning Merle Travis’s fingerpicking style.

In Burney’s words, the Sun is a “singery-songwriting, metal, jazzcore pop band. But all that other shit is just kinda bullshit. It’s just the pop band part that matters.” For whatever reason, his brand of pop rock spliced with Americana didn’t go over well with the indie labels. Having spent some time recording in Chicago, he passed off demos to Thrill Jockey, who, in turn, just passed—or as Burney puts it, scrunched their faces and went “ehhhh.”

“It was a little kiddy or something. They were like adults. They were onto making adult, thinking man’s rock,” he says.

Then suddenly, through their manager, the demo found its way into the hands of major label A&R reps who let on that they’d be interested in hearing more. Burney scrambled to pull a band together, calling on friends and members of the Columbus



band Flotation Walls, including Arendt and Forsblom. A few weeks went by with a less-than-stellar drummer before Brown was able to squeeze some breathing room from the New Bomb Turks to head down to L.A. After only three hours with Brown in a rehearsal space, Perry Watts-Russell, who was about to step in as Senior VP of A&R at Warner Bros. expressed interest. Caulkins would enter later, after the major label deal had been struck. In just a few short months, the Sun had pulled off what most bands never accomplish in their entire careers.

Watts-Russell, whom Burney describes as a true music fan and the one person he's met who gets music business ethics the most, says that what drew him to the Sun initially was Burney's wild energy, which fed into a "youthful, devil-may-care exuberance." Afterwards, Watts-Russell heard a 20-song demo that reminded him, in rawness and experimentation, of a demo the Vines had sent him when he worked at Capitol. "The Sun's demos were all over the place, from folk to rock to garage to electronic," he says. "But certainly there was a through-line that I saw in attitude and energy."

It's undoubtedly a great story, but one that comes with its drawbacks. It would take three years for the Sun to actually release their first full-length. In the meantime, they've released only two EPs, 2003's *Love And Death* and 2004's *Did Your Mother Tell You?* Watts-Russell attributes part of this delay to Burney needing to take time off to pace himself and figure out if the music was all that it could be. Still, Brown says, "It's taken so damn long to finish our record." Back when he was in Gaunt, it was possible to record an album in September and have it in stores by November. But in the case of *Youth*, he explains, all the music had been completed by October of 2004. He admits that it's a fact of life that comes from trading off between indies and majors, but "it's frustrating because I think that we would be in the midst of

making what I would say is one of our best records right now had we gotten this record out and toured it and gotten an album away."

The main problem, Brown says, is that the band, which claims to have roughly 80 songs tucked away, is backed up with ideas. "I think that's a problem that a lot of us have with this whole thing is that we weren't ever given the opportunity to naturally evolve as just a band of people playing." It's one of the shortcomings of being a commodity. "We have a lot of freedom and we love our label. It's been great, but it's definitely not complete and total freedom."



Despite all this, the band doesn't seem terribly worried, even amid the ongoing turmoil of the record business. Caulkins expresses no doubt that the band will come into its own once *Blame It On The Youth* finally comes out. Burney blurts out, "We totally have way more control of our destiny than we've thought in the past."

It's part of an ongoing theme. These days, Burney spends time mulling over the conflict between art and entertainment.

He wants to entertain and make people feel good, and he hates it when artists are too self-absorbed. His favorite thing about Columbus is that people mean what they say and don't see niceness as a weakness. "I'm pretty idealistic about all this stuff at this point, still. It's not like we're gonna get rid of corporations. It's just we gotta try to inspire them to be better citizens themselves."

Brown doesn't think that's possible. "What's the point of being a good citizen if it's not gonna make you any money?" he asks.

"It's all ending guys," Caulkins says smugly. "Make good art while you still can."

Burney shakes his head. On one wrist he has a tattoo that reads "fear," and on the other is one that reads "hope." "It's not all ending," he says, more to himself than anyone else. **NMM**

BEST NEW MUSIC



THE BAD PLUS Suspicious Activity?

Columbia

Not unlike Brad Mehldau before them, the Bad Plus have little business beyond upgrading their reputation from "that slightly quirky jazz trio who cover rock songs" to "that slightly quirky jazz trio who have no qualms with rocking your lame ass." Bigger and more audacious than last year's *Give* or its predecessors, fourth album *Suspicious Activity?* twists and amplifies the sound of Brubeck's cool-cat twinklings into nimble, thundering jams without batting an eyelash. Ethan Iverson bashes out ultra-tonal piano melodies, Reid Anderson plucks away at a fat (and phat) upright bass and David King (also of the free-jazzier Happy Apple) keeps a dizzying pace with pyrotechnic drum work. Sure enough, the three instruments steal the scene from each other in perfect equilibrium, diverging and soloing and regrouping like your typical cabaret-jazz act, but the best numbers here—"Prehensile Dream," "Anthem For The Earnest" and the mind-bogglingly sweet reworking of the theme from *Chariots Of Fire*—rumble with a linearity and focus more reminiscent of your favorite old-fashioned four-chord rawker. Compared to the tiresome noodlings of groups bent on dressing jazz up like rock, the mischievous conviction with which the Bad Plus dress rock up like jazz falls somewhere between refreshing and downright awe-inspiring. >>>DANIEL LEVIN-BECKER

Link www.thebadplus.com

File Under Rock takes five

RIYL Brad Mehldau, Dave Brubeck, Ben Folds Five sans ego



DEVENDRA BANHART Cripple Crow

XL

Call it serendipity, skill or screwiness, but good tunes keep finding neo-folker Devendra Banhart. *Cripple Crow*, isn't a quite a neo-boho *Highway 61 Revisited*, but the wealth of plugged-in R&B bangers signal a departure... kind of. Top of the heap is "Chinese Children," an instantly singable, worldwide shout-out backed with weighty bass and electric guitar. "Long Haired Child," "I Feel Just Like A Child" and "Little Boys" cop a similar Fairport Convention-recorded-in-Motown feel. However, *Cripple Crow*'s not all about Devendra's kids, or cranking the amps above five. Even with sitar and tabla giving the mesmerizing "Lazy Butterfly" a straight outta Bollywood aura, or the flamenco finger-picking and Spanish lyrics on a handful of tracks like "Quedate Luna," plenty of the 22 songs stick to the Nick Drake leanings that made the freak-folk prince's pits worth licking in the first place. Impressively, a seamless queue is never disrupted, even by the weird-beard, hoot-filled Tropicália of "The Beatles" (sample lyric: "Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr are the only Beatles in the world"). Credit studio musicians Noah Georgeson, Vetiver's Andy Cabic and producer Thom Monahan (as well as guests like CocoRosie and Bunny Brains) to make Devendra's craggy voice wiggle down your throat to coat your tummy.

>>>REED FISCHER

Link www.xlrecordings.com

File Under Banhart comes alive!

RIYL Nick Drake, Ibrahim Ferrer, Cal Stevens, Vetiver





THE DOUBLE

Loose In The Air

Matador

It's no secret that rock needs—is begging for, actually—a swift kick in the rear, a full cavity search. With no new real movements afoot and few in recent memory (does throwback-rock qualify as a movement?), the Double's liberal blend of imaginative pop and faux-whimsical force makes for a delicious idea: an unhinged brother to New York rock's fortunate son, Interpol. Their third album (the first was released as a duo) takes that stature and weight as a startling point, distending and elongating with careful feedback, dense guitars and piano, not to mention echo chambers, soft resignation and infinitely floating space. Signed to Matador to much fanfare earlier this year, this Brooklyn foursome has already set NYC abuzz about its live show and is poised to draw widespread attention not only from the city's cognoscenti, but from a pop-added public as well. Pulling off what many have tried and failed to do, *Loose In The Air* is likeable rock music that doesn't sound too much like likeable rock music, with its unexpected loops and lulls that point to a wandering underbelly. Claiming far-flung influences is nothing new, but the Double would have you believe that bits of Yoko Ono, the Zombies, Brian Eno, Syd Barrett and Alice Coltrane have all been incorporated and whipped into their batter. It's a gutsy claim, and these guys have reason to make it. >>>STEVEN CHEN

Web www.thedoublethedouble.com
File Under Believe the hype
RIYL Interpol, Brian Eno, the Doors



PRINCESS SUPERSTAR

My Machine

IK7

Princess Superstar's love affair with electro hits critical mass on her fifth album, the place where old gimmicks die hard. She's still playfully pornographic and spitting LSAT words like Mike Jones namedrops, but the luscious lady of loquaciousness has abandoned her schickily Dennis Miller-meets-Lil Kim pop-culture coochie pops. The focus on *My Machine* is detailed, non-linear, novellette-ready storytelling—though she's still throbbing with friction-filled wordplay ("I never knew about the Bloods and the Crips, but I knew about the tucks and the nips/College I skipped but I got the collagen in my lips"). It's a damn-near-78-minute concept album set in 2080, where Princess's 10,000 clones enact a total media monopoly, making her not only the most famous person on the planet, but the *only* famous person on the planet—all set to piston-smooth, hard-rocking. Peachy-keen production by Jacques Lu Cont, Junior Sanchez, Armand Van Helden and Todd Terry. It's cute satire on our *Us Weekly* culture (as well as some totally sexy 'techno-hop'), but it's far more revealing as an extension of the real-life Concetta Kirschner: Is she just having second thoughts about spending a decade cultivating a personality based on a quasi-fictional solipsism? The title track's vulnerability belies its oh-so-clever rhymes, summing up an unresolved existential crisis via a machine that lets Princess turn into anything she wants. Ultimately she's unable to decide and thrilling to watch. >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

Link www.princesssuperstar.com
File Under Infinite Christ
RIYL Deltron 3030, Miss Kittin, Peaches



OPETH

Ghost Reveries

Roadrunner

With a 10-year rap sheet for change-on-a-dime mood swings and epic-length songs, Opeth stick out as one of metal's most successful outsider-artists. Who else could pull off releasing diametrically opposite companion albums—the Abel-like *Deliverance* and Cane-esque *Damnation*—tour for each, and still find fans with the patience to stick around. On *Ghost Reveries*, the Swedes' eighth album in 10 years, Opeth reward their fans with a well-balanced yin-yang combination that surpasses their previous milestone, *Blackwater Park*, in risk-to-success quotients. During the 10-and-a-half minutes of "Ghost Of Perdition," frontman Mikael Åkerfeldt transitions so effortlessly between roiled gnarling and wound-licking wailing that it suits his God-questioning lyrics perfectly, trapped halfway between purgatory and hell. With the addition of occasional Arch Enemy keyboardist Per Wiberg, the band's lighter sections sound icier than ever, giving him room in the heavier parts for stunning Bach-meets-Sabbath key-riffs that rival Åkerfeldt's gutsy guitars. As a whole, the album rises and falls like a Greek tragedy, or better yet, *The Lord Of The Rings*, with valleys of synths encased by mountains of ebbing guitar solos, a pleasant side effect from three Porcupine Tree-produced albums. *Ghost Reveries* is so complete that if Opeth broke up without recording another note, it would serve as a fitting epitaph. >>>KORY GROSS

Link www.opeth.com
File Under The Return of the Kings
RIYL Emperor, In Flames, Pink Floyd



RICHARD SWIFT

The Novelist/Walking Without Effort

Secretly Canadian

As an introduction to "unknown" songwriter Richard Swift, you could do worse than this orchestral-pop double-whammy. This two-disc set comprises *The Novelist*, a baroque lo-fi song suite, and *Walking Without Effort*, a snazzy, '70s-influenced crafted-pop record in the mold of early McCartney. Alone, they'd be impressive, but as a pair they identify the wild-eyed Swift as a graceful new songwriting voice capable of old-timey melancholy. The opening choral "ooh"s of *Novelist*'s lead-off track, "Foreward," announce Swift's intentions: his songs exist in a time-vacuum, seemingly crackling from Victrola speakers despite their CD technology. "Lovely Night" shows off his whiskey-stepped croon following an upward-spiraling, Brit-inflected melody, the room echoing with barroom piano and military drum rolls. It all sounds about 70 years old, crackling like a Van Dyke Parks LP left out in the sun too long. After *The Novelist*'s all-too-short 19 minutes, the Leonard Cohen-esque shuffle of "Looking Back, I Should Have Been Home More" segues into *Walking Without Effort*, which shifts gears and tape fidelities; acoustic guitars shimmer, horns and strings strut and the nuance in Swift's voice takes center stage. *Walking*'s California lit uplifts as only '70s pop can, with Swift's p.o.v. as a confused, searching poet casting a sincere shadow which deepens the songs' effects. >>>TODD GOLDSTEIN

Link www.richardswift.us
File Under Your Gramophone's Pop
RIYL Rufus Wainwright, Ron Sexsmith, the Robot Ate Me

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AGAINST ME! *Searching For A Former Clarity* Fat Wreck Chords



On their third full-length, Gainesville, Florida, anarcho-punk Against Me! have become fully aware of their surroundings, dropped the "we're all in this together" posturing, and made a record essentially about all the shit people talk about their alleged "sell-out" status. The thing is, Against Me! haven't actually changed that much. They're still four hyper-political dirty punks with a love for Billy Bragg and the Replacements, channeling energy through an anthem-craving hardcore youth movement. Unfortunately, their first-in-the-air lyrical content has given way to a defensive stance, making an answer record to all the cries of corporate kowtowing. Still, Clarity finds strength in slower moments of focused songwriting and increased contributions from band members who make it clear that this isn't just singer Tom Gabel's show. With variety providing a welcome diversion to the album's at times over-the-top introspection, Against Me! are able to walk away with what will likely be remembered as a transitional record; they've yet to make their *London Calling*, but this could be their *Give 'Em Enough Rope*. >>>PETE D'ANGELO
Link www.againstme.net
File Under Who's selling out?
RIYL Lucero, Weakerthans, Billy Bragg

AZ *A.W.O.L.* Quiet Money-Fastlife



"Who's the most underrated? G Rap, AZ and Jada," says AZ on "Still Alive." It's easy to turn a deaf ear to rappers singing their own praises (hell, even Cassidy said he was as good as Biggie and Pun), but AZ isn't exaggerating—he really is an underappreciated monster of an emcee. AZ was the only guest who could stand next to Nas on *Illmatic*, and *A.W.O.L.* attempts to rekindle that golden era by utilizing golden-era production. From "The Come Up," a beat only DJ Premier could freak on, to the Audio Two homage "AZ's Chillin'," the record sounds fresh but familiar in the best of ways. Though *A.W.O.L.* can never make history in '05, AZ The Visualza sounds more vivid than he has since '95, rolling his syllables like an automatic weapon on every cut. The relative brevity and quality of *A.W.O.L.* also make it play like an album in an era where singles reign supreme. A damn fine record and one more reason AZ deserves the credit he may never get. >>>OWEN STROCK
Link www.fastlifemusic.com/az
File Under Stillmatic after all these years
RIYL Nas, Mobb Deep, Jadakiss

BARBEZ *Insignificance* important!



Barbez may be the greatest bar-mitzvah band ever. Only their penchant for blatantly, dark cabaret jam sessions holds the cantankerous Klezmerites from owning the party circuit. When the Brooklyn quintet isn't smashing Russian vodka anthems like "The Sea Spread Wide" asunder with shards of Kurt Well-y ephemera, they're rewriting dark indie rock for the post-Bad Seeds generation. Throughout their third album, *Insignificance*, Russia-born singer Ksenia Vidyaykina spans an impressive range from howling baritone to glass-shattering god whistles. Her voice is so versatile that when she duets with the band's theremin player, it's difficult to discern which is which. On the title song, Vidyaykina's insurmountable intensity rivals Diamanda Galas as she swoops around frightening sci-fi cadences and plucky marimbas. While the band's influences are vast, and that sometimes leads to musical rambling, it's rare that a band as musically advanced as Barbez, or at least one willing to take broad chances, has such a clear vision of their art. >>>KORY GROW
Link www.barbez.com
File Under Bravo Nagilah
RIYL Angels Of Light, Tom Waits, Maria Callas

THE BATS *At The National Grid* Magic Marker



At *The National Grid* hardly sounds like the work of a band emerging from a decade-long hiatus. After spending the prior 10 years defining the jangle wing of the then de rigueur New Zealand pop sound, many assumed the Bats had quietly disbanded. Grid celebrates the virtues of patience. Most of its tracks sport the same folk-faced fireside charm as the Bats' earliest work, yet somehow sidestep rehash. Scott's and guitarist Kaye Woodward's voices have aged into wonderful harmonic foils, converting an early band weakness into a newfound strength. Importantly, Grid weaves in aspects of the dronescapes that marked a departure on 1995's excellent *Couchmaster*, offering relief from the upbeat 4/4 docket that at times nudged the Kiwis' mid-life outings toward sameness. During their respite, an import-only greatest hits package flawlessly bundled the Bats' indispensable highs. Improbably, *At The National Grid* holds up as a fitting companion piece. >>>ELEN SARVADY
Link www.magicmarkerrecords.com
File Under Still jangly after all these years
RIYL The Clean, the Lucksmiths, Belle And Sebastian, the Chills

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- Smother

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BLACK DICE

Broken Ear Record DFA-Astralwerks



Without longtime drummer Hisham Bharoocha, pedals 'n' electronics (now-lyric Black Dice no longer have a letter to the human world. Gone

are the tribal beats and comforting acoustics of his boomy drums, so Dice are forced to create their own rhythmic matrix using an arsenal of icy toys, spiky noisemakers and loop pedals. Their album titles have always been annoyingly hyper-literal—from the tangerine dreams of *Beaches And Canyons*—and the broken beats of *Broken Ear Record* are no exception. They're using slightly off loops (no drum machines, thanks) to create broken crunk, broken M.I.A. and broken afrobeat ("Motorcycle" sounds like a dazed Thomas Mapfumo playing *Dance Dance Revolution*), even though all their usual fatty timbres are still painting rainbows. The whole thing is a total Cluster-funk clusterfuck that lives up to that DFA association and leaves pastoral patches on the beach. Even if the beats are a little stiff. >>>CHRISTOPHER H. WEINGARTEN

Link www.dfarecords.com

File Under Slashedance

RIYL Out Hud, Gang Gang Dance, Need New Body

CALLA

Collisions Beggers Banquet



Atmospheric bands like the Verve and Pink Floyd eventually learned how to write pop songs, so it's no surprise that, with each passing album,

Calla moves a little further from their much-lauded "incandyr soundscapes" roots. *Collisions* marks the midway point where Calla ditches Morricone for Marr; the audio tumbleweeds, creaky samples and hypnotic bass of 2003's *Telesite* taking a backseat to strummy guitar workouts à la Interpol. The band proves itself perfectly capable of tackling the stylistic change, though the new focus somehow makes Aurelio Valle's already limited voice sound even more limited still. Valle's strength has always been in wispy, barely-there vocals that topped wispy, only-slightly-more-there tracks, and he's hit and miss on the more muscular *Collisions*. At his best, the band sounds like the Poles on cocaine; at his worst, the growing pains come off like a vocal lesson gone wrong. When Valle starts working his throat as hard as he's working his guitar, Calla will finally be a rock band—not an atmospheric band—to reckon with. >>>TOM MALLON

Link www.callamusie.com

File Under Cough syrup cranked to 11

RIYL Pixies, Interpol, Low, the Stills

CHIN UP CHIN UP

Chin Up Chin Up Flameshovel



When originally released in 2002, Chin Up Chin Up's debut EP painted the Chicago art-pop band as promising, but too

youthfully aloof and content to reinvent the wheel. Now reissued after the release of their first full-length, their eponymous debut is more a snapshot of a young band on the cusp of change. Trace elements of a band yearning to break away from their hometown's math rock legacy can be heard amongst the twinkling guitars and pulsing synths of tracks like "I'm Not Asking For A Tennis Bracelet" and "Fuck You, Elton John." These are the seeds of the textural awareness and dynamic sensitivity that dominate their current material. The material on *Chin Up Chin Up* spans three different recording sessions and nearly four years of the band's existence but flows with surprising coherency from beginning to end. If the liner notes didn't say otherwise, it'd be difficult to distinguish old from new.

>>>MATTHEW FIELD

Link www.chinupchinup.com

File Under Wrigley feel

RIYL American Analog Set, Tortoise-era Tortoise

CLUE TO KALO

One Way, It's Every Way Mush



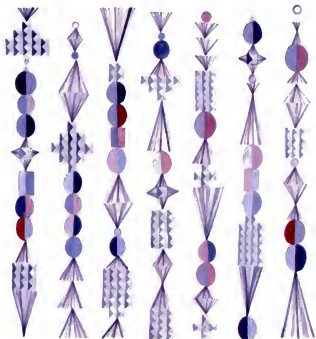
With 2003's aptly titled *Come Here When You Sleepwalk*, Clue to Kalo (nom de plume of Australian PowerBook troubadour Mark Mitchell) serenely rode

the crest of a white-noisy lap-pop wave that would end up soaking the early-to-mid-double-naughts with processed dicks and cuts. Two years after the snap, crackle, pop typhoon, *One Way, It's Every Way*, Mitchell's sophomore effort under the Kalo name, emerges, and like most of the sedate aural snapshots that comprise Mush releases, few changes are made to his whimsical aesthetic. Like an introspective and shoe-gazed Dan Snaith holding electronic hands with a sweeter Greg Davis, Mitchell offers up lap-pop in the most dictionary of variances—chimney, processed strings are snipped and sliced ("Nine Thousand Nautical Miles"), while prickly lines of synthetic horn shoot through folk songs glued together by cloying vocals and sublime "I" chimes ("The Tense Changes"). Kalo hasn't created a distinct or fresh enough sound to face aggro-electro overpopulation, but it's darling nonetheless.

>>>ROBBIE MACKAY

Link www.cluetokalo.com

File Under Feely Drawn Boy
RIYL Hood, Greg Davis, Four Tet



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CONSTANTINES

Tournament Of Hearts Sub Pop



On their 2001 debut, the Constantines proclaimed, "We want the death of rock and roll!" Don't believe them for a second. Just beneath

this Toronto quintet's post-rock veneer pulses a vibrant roadhouse spirit. *Tournament Of Hearts* ups the ante from 2003's excellent *Shine A Light* by refusing to reconcile the Constantines' myriad styles, and instead honing them all to razor-edged immediacy. After two-and-a-half tracks of controlled burn that limit guitars to quick jabs and feedback squalls, punctuating Dallas Wehrle's and Doug MacGregor's airtight rhythm section, "Love In Fear" gallops home on a skittering riff. The band fully cuts loose with "Lizaveta's" cathartic warning-ridden bass and foreboding horns before stopping on a dime for the plaintive singer-songwriter turn of "Soon Enough," which accentuates Bryan Webb's raspy Joe Strummer-esque wail. Soon enough, the Cons morph into the brawny meat-and-potatoes rawk, but minutes later rumble like Wire commotion to score a military commemoration. >>>GLEN SARVADY
Link www.constantines.ca
File Under Shining brighter still.
RIYL Fugazi, June of 44, Pearl Jam

THE CORAL

Invisible Invasion Delatonic-Columbia



Although refreshingly devoid of indie snarkiness, the Coral have yet to make that gutsy breakthrough to live up to their claim that they're

"so progressive." With all of the members under 25, and their clear, poetic-yet-gleeful sound influenced by Morricone and the Doors, the Coral have amazing potential for awesomeness through their eclectic vision. Showing the most promise is the retro-western sounds of "She Sings The Mourning," with its catchy and mournful Leonard Cohen deadpan. The subdued and spooky "Come Home" seethes with dense lyrics ("She's swimming in the blackest sea with the magpies in the mysteries") before building into a series of near-experimental crescendos—nice even though their ample energy would be better served by creativity instead of emulation. *Invisible Invasion* sounds like the soundtrack to a Sofia Coppola film about teenagers in the '60s where the elements are all kinds familiar, but hey, that's why you like it.

>>>AIMEE FOUNTAIN
Link www.thecoral.ca.uk
File Under A twistful of dollars
RIYL Ennio Morricone, the Velvet Underground, a darker Simon & Garfunkel

CURUMIN

Achados E Perdidos Quannum



Hard to tell to Quannum, the left-coast hip-hop imprint home to Blackalicious and DJ Shadow, for diversifying

with class: first nifty Filipino-Australian laptop duo Apscl, and now a shaggy Brazilian dude who goes by the name Curumin. Whether you peg it as samba-hop or trip-Tropicália or bossa-nova, *Achados E Perdidos* makes quite the joyful noise, channeling Stevie Wonder and Musica Popular Brasileira luminaries like Jorge Ben and Gilberto Gil in equal measure. For their infectiously sunny disposition, though, there's an unnatural density to these instrumental orgies—the sound of thick breakbeats intruding on melodies that should be light and summery, or of Curumin's simple, Caetano Veloso-y croon straining to stay clean over dazzling layers of intricate percussion. The marriage of traditional Brazilian idioms with hip-hop production is unquestionably fresh, but its realization is accompanied by an awkward heaviness, making *Achados* a delightful listen, but ultimately the best of neither world. >>>DANIEL LEVIN-BECKER
Link www.quannum.com
File Under Hip Hop Hoary
RIYL Jorge Ben, Stevie Wonder, Jamiroquai

CYNE

Evolution Fight City Centre Offices



It's hard to get your conscious hip-hop noticed nowadays without cartoonish conspiracy theories (Non Phixion) or bizarre dietary rants (Dead Prez). Liberal agitators Cyne fail to make a real lyrical mark beyond the counterintuitive "Fuck America," which imagines the country as an alluring prostitute ("I paid for some head but you gave me a hand job"), given that the sociopolitical commentary on *Evolution Fight* could come from any MC's list of grievances. But at least the Florida quartet's second LP is consistently enjoyable and party-friendly all the same. Akin and Cise Star share the mic with laudable vigor and wit. Even more impressive is the diversity of live-instrument-enhanced beats offered by producers Speck and Enoch—souful to sinister piano lones, old-school bump-funk and schmooze mind-expansion jams. The music or the Message aren't groundbreaking, but with a little evolving of their own, Cyne have what it takes to one day get attention on their own terms. >>>DANIEL LEVIN-BECKER
Link www.cyme.net
File Under Y'all stay up
RIYL Binary Star, Hieroglyphics, Dead Prez

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DIOS MALOS

Dios Malos Starline International



It's no surprise that power-pop quartet Dios Malos (formerly Dios) dutifully took the high road on self-titled record number two. In

Hawthorne, California, the weed is too good, the sunsets too transcendent and the songs too saccharine sweet for these gents to stay angry about a forced name change. Together with producer Phil Ek (Built To Spill, the Shins) for the first time, the quartet tease out a bit more sonic weirdness and beef up Joel Morales's vocals, keeping their druggy three-chord melodies and conjuring the best bubble gum imaginable. "Goin' Home" glides effortlessly on the wings of Weezer riffs, the vocal/piano pairing of "EPK" mirrors Harry Nilsson and "I'm Only Daydreaming" plays out like a Britt Daniel ballad. Lyrically, it's pretty straightforward druggies-added fare, but every so often Morales drops a zinger like "I wish I was on acid, and I am right now" so it's clear he's not completely unaware of himself or too blissed by the, uh, groove.

>>>REED FISCHER

Link www.wearedios.com

File Under: Built to chill
RIYL: Superdrag, Matthew Sweet, Grandaddy

GHOSTY

Grow Up Or Sleep In Future Farmer



Jazzy indie-rock guru Geoff Farina of Karate closed up the dojo, so it's high time for a new master to rise. Ghosty's

Grow Up Or Sleep In isn't fraught with long, jammy solos, but Kansan Andrew Connor does insert the requisite cool, moody chord progressions into his catchy, courtinized arrangements. It's a unified collection that glides from Wilco's proggy side, the Shins at their most beatific and then back to Farina—not an album for the prickly at heart. Songs like "Big Surrender" show off his smoothed-out A.C. Newman pipes, and pass along some serious musical endorphins. The always-sunny Wayne Coyne even adds plegmy vocals to the Zombies-soaked "Clouds Solve It." With studio touches like trippy organ or vaudevillian whistling and saloon piano, Ghosty keep flipping their script. Is that a jaw harp? "Sometimes the picture's terribly wrong, sometimes things are fucking wonderful," Connor sings on "Henry Greene." We know which has our vote.

>>>REED FISCHER

Link www.ghostymusic.com

File Under: A Ghost Is Born
RIYL: Karate, Loose Fur, A.C. Newman

THE KALLIKAK FAMILY

May 23rd, 2007 Tell All



When the fortune teller said, "You'll die May 23rd, 2007," Andrew Peterson of Kallikak Family didn't shrug it off. He embraced the omen,

letting it guide the metaphysical, found-sound elegy that is his second record. After moving from Chicago to Portland, Peterson began collaborating with Phil Eyrum of the Microphones among others, heralding the evolution of a new sound. *May 23rd* unfolds a fever-dream roadmap of dates and places from 2003 right through Peterson's predicted expiration date. For "Second Phase," a breathy chorus of female "aaaahhs" is staggered against acoustic strums and skittish beats. Using a bridge of more guitar, Peterson soars into "Bells In Bergamo," a haunting re-imagining of Italian church bells. The eerie, viscous hum beneath them keeps you wondering why these ceremonial bells are ringing out. Are we in a womb or a tomb?

Regardless, *May 23rd*, is sound collage of the highest (if unerring) caliber. A shame he only has a few years left to refine his art.

>>>STEVE CIABATTONI

Link www.tellallrecords.com
File Under: Death becomes him
RIYL: DJ Spooky, the Books, the Microphones

THE KING OF FRANCE

The King Of France Echo



The King Of France are uneasy with their connection to New York City's Scene-with-a-capital-S, and with good reason: their exuberant,

geeky pop exists in an entirely different universe from NYC's chilly emotional reserve. The duo's self-titled debut is laudable in its intentions and pleasingly conscious of rock's nerdy-outsider history (drummer/journalist Michael Azerrad wrote *Our Band Could Be Your Life*, the best book on the pre-alt-rock '80s ever), though it rarely lives up to the ecstasies promised by its implied "nerds in the land of cool" tagline. To the King's credit, their musicianship and '60s-pop stylizations are impeccable. Lead singer/guitarist Steve Salad yowls with a shaky voice, swooping around the melodies and shouting skewed observations like a self-aware Mangrum or Damielle. "Watch Out For the Man" has the most memorable chorus of the bunch, a buoyant sing-along full of Kinks-y energy, but, like much of the record, its potential for emotional connection is squashed under geekiness.

>>>TODD GOLDSTEIN

Link www.thekingoffranceband.com
File Under: The geeks inherit the Earth
RIYL: Moxxy Frivious, Mountain Goats

"The band members would not want any of the money. They would not want to play any differently than I tell them to. They would not want any credit for anything that they do. And they would have to be the size of the 'Homies' collectible figurines that you find in gumball machines. On those conditions, I'd love to have a band."



JASCHA EPHRAIM
self-titled debut

"Jascha Ephraim combines the electronic music of bands like Devo and Kraftwerk with the humor and lyrical ability of Beck on his new, self-titled album."

—Music Monthly

www.jaschaeephraim.com



www.xoticrecords.com



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KOOL KEITH

Lost Masters Volume 2 DMAFT-Uglio



Kool Keith's 700-or-so releases since 2001's *Spankmaster*, have devolved deeper and deeper into rhymeless perv-talk and stream-of-

conscious lyrical labyrinth, usually backed by the burly beats of Kustmaster Kurt or Keith's own Zapp funk. *Lost Masters Volume 2* (actually a set of all new material) is the best Keith record in forever because the skipping, retarded beats (all produced by Keith himself) brilliantly match his increasingly hard-to-follow flow. It's so minimal that it makes "Wait (The Whisper Song)" sound like Phil Spector: tinny drum machines tip-tapping like the ghost of a ill-dubbed Miami bass cassette, wobbly bedroom-crunk metronomes clicking and clacking like an intro that never ends and Keith's vocals mixed annoyingly loud. And if Ghostface's "booger-green '68 Pacer" line seemed like a revelation in twisted/brilliant poetics, then *Lost Masters 2* is an apotheosis of Mark E. Smith proportions: "Forget sneakers that look like hot dogs/Yo, fam, you hear me chewing your chicken giz-zards." >>>CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

Link www.oglio.com

File Under Or. Octo... gone.

RIYL Sensational, King Gizzard

LIVING THINGS

Ahead Of The Lions Jive



The Living Things' debut was dead before arrival. The band—along with its album—was dropped when Geffen absorbed DreamWorks, but their

quasi-political opus is finally set to hit US shelves. Leftist ranting is in punker DNA, but unlike their prosperous brethren in Green Day, Living Things are still brash and unpolished. The band channels peak-form Social Distortion with singer Lillian Berlin alternately squawking and punning, highlighting punk's ferocity and its sexual undertones. Both methods express frustration equally well, though the strained screams for love in "I Owe" are genuinely moving since they tackle both. Despite the album's edge, the rumor that the boys were dropped from Geffen because of their scathing politics may be based more on onstage antics than actual music (singing "don't believe the police" is unlikely to cause the same ruckus as throwing meat at a Bush blow-up doll). In whatever form, the politics give purpose to the band's acidity and masterfully mix rebellion with hooks.

Link www.livingthingsmusic.com

File Under Return of the Living shred

RIYL The Libertines, the Clash, the Pogues

THE MASS Perfect Picture Of Wisdom And Boldness

Crucial Blast



Oakland's the Mass specialize in spiky post-Metalljazz, sprinkled with sassy skronking chopped and screwed to sludgy perfection.

Inching along with what took Naked City two minutes to vomit up, the Mass's songs average about eight minutes of no-agenda sonic terror topped by singer Matt Waters's free-jazz reed work. While the production on *Perfect Picture Of Wisdom And Boldness* often sounds as gritty and sweaty as the band's distortion, there's urgency to the Mass's Bernard-Herrmann-in-2010 soundtracks. At times they slip into tribal jam mode, which falters for a while before really taking shape with saxophone improvisations. On the opposite end of the spectrum, "Gas Pipe," is a death-comes-rapping melody of all the Mass's punk inspirations (a little Napalm Death, a little Misfits, some Yamatsuka Eye), hindered only by the album's garbage-can recording quality.

>>>KORY GROW

Link www.crucialblast.net

File Under The New Zornographers

RIYL Converge, Naked City,

Hot Rat-ers Zappa

MINOTAUR SHOCK

Maritime AAD



"Say 18th century pirates washed up on South Beach, Miami in 1982," posits Bristolian beat-tweaker David Edwards. An amusing

little proposition, sure, but once Edwards articulates the two idle fascinations that intersected to inspire *Maritime*—namely, seafaring and vintage FM rock—it makes sense. Without context, his second album under the Minotaur Shock moniker is little more than a tey "atmospheric techno" record, listlessly adrift on scurrying melodies and skeletal beats. Somehow, though, with its strange and distant twin themes in mind, a conceptual charm creeps into *Maritime*. Hmmm... so that funky break in "Mistaken Tourist" is meant to sound like a dance club scene from *Scarface*. And the IDM jumble of "Hilly" does call to mind the cryptic chummings of a ship's hold now that you mention it. The album's studied juxtaposition may not make its music much more than pleasant, tasteful epic-rock in miniature, but there's a certain rainy-day fun imagining what Edwards was imagining.

>>>DANIEL LEVIN-BECKER

Link www.minotaurshock.com

File Under Intelligent dance sea shanties

RIYL Caribou, Wagon Christ, Autecore

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MT. EGYPT

Perspectives Record Collection



A lyrical shift occurs a minute or so into track one on Travis Graves' second full-length as Mt. Egypt. A lumbering country waltz begins

with introspection ("Sometimes I like to see myself bleed") and suddenly, French horns herald the chorus's arrival, the curtain of singer-songwriter subjectivity lifts, and Graves' weary baritone encompasses the universal ("Everyone needs a way to believe that what they do has meaning"). Moments like these, where personal observations give way to plainspoken truths, give sparkle to the lovely Perspectives. Graves writes sad, simple folk songs in the Will Oldham vein, his voice and melodies recalling Jump, Little Children's Jay Clifford in his more somber moments, but his lyrics give the album its true potency. Lines such as "I'm gonna sing 'til I don't need a thing to hold on to/I'm gonna write 'til there's nothing inside that's not true" are so overt in their portrayal of young, existential confusion, that they might be easily dismissed, but his story rings truer than most.

>>>TODD GOLDSTEIN

Link www.mtegypt.com

File Under Palace in Wonderland

RIYL My Morning Jacket, Matt Pond PA

MUGISON *Mugimama, Is This Monkey Music?* Ipecac



Before collecting music awards in his native Iceland, Mugison was busy adding credentials to his hipster-nomad résumé: The singer-songwriter couch-surfed in London, cruised off the coast of Russia and even worked as a clown. On his third album (and first for Ipecac), Mugison adopts the same adventurous approach. *Mugimama, Is This Monkey Music?* is a roving exploration of soundscapes, packed with shambling folk, moody atmospherics and the occasional spoken word piece. The album follows the tradition of early Beck, delivering idiosyncratic lyrics over a blend of lo-fi guitars and electronic glitches. On "The Chicken Song," he and his girlfriend Rina take turns cooing quirky lines to each other. "I want to be intellectual," he says before declaring "I like tits and ass." But on the blues-inspired "Muri Muri," the former fisherman reveals a wounded heart sinking into the depths of the delta. "I'm only a shoul-der/I'm only a kiss," he laments, "Good for comfort/Cool for tears." >>>GINNY YANG

Link www.mugison.com

File Under Off-beat troubadour

RIYL Mellow Gold, Cornelius, wanderlust

MY MORNING JACKET

Z ATO-RCA



We're not in Kentucky anymore. On their fourth album, My Morning Jacket have largely abandoned their trademark reverb-heavy hickster sound for straightforward indie-rock, and the results astound. Frontman Jim James leads his group into new, minimalist territory with the addition of keyboardist Bo Koster and guitarist Carl Broemel. Building tracks like "Into the Woods" slowly and thoughtfully, My Morning Jacket emerge as the lovechildren of Neil Young and Steve Reich, placing epic guitar solos atop carefully layered bass and keyboard passages. While James's vocals remain awash in reverb, Z lets the singer play with more complex lyrical passages, trying his hand at lush, surly-rock harmonies in "Wordless Chorus." My Morning Jacket also visit the beach on Z's catchiest number, "Off the Record," a hook-laden pop song built around the theme from *Hawaii 5-0*'s chipmy guitar solo. It's a group barn-burner that proves, years later, that a full-band still stands behind James' reverb-driven vision.

>>>MIKE GREENHAUS

Link www.mymorningjacket.com

File Under On The Beach... no, really

RIYL Wilco, Kings of Leon, Ambulance LTD

NORTH MISSISSIPPI ALLSTARS

Electric Blue Watermelon ATO-RCA



With roots in punk and two feet in the jam-band circuit, the North Mississippi Allstars continue to have a deliciously askew take on traditional hill-country blues boogie. Their fourth album retains their Allman-style slides, but leans heavier on the rock, with an armada of guests adding their own inflections to the mix. "Stompin' My Foot" could even set the most mellowed Bonnaroo crowd to stomping theirs, with its staccato patterns of dance guitar, propulsive drums and rapping by intrepid Memphis thug Al Kapone. Otha Turner's fire-and-drum track, "Bounce Ball," marches along breezily while Lucinda Williams' throaty voice gives "Hurry Up Sunrise" the timeless roughness that its simple, hopeful songwriting begs for. But the credit goes to the Allstars for integrating their collaborators flawlessly into an album where the songs that sound time-worn and the ones that sound new feel more and more like each other—and less like anything else around. >>>JOSH STARR

Link www.nmallstars.com

File Under Blues-buried jam

RIYL Allman Brothers, Widespread Panic,

Blues Explosion

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PILOTDRIFT

Water Sphere Good



Upon catching the ears of the Polyphonic Spree with their self-released debut, these Texarkana, Texas symphonic art-rockers were soon signed to the Spree's Good Records label. At its outset, *Water Sphere* erupts with cosmic psych-rock transmissions from *The Satellite Heart* aimed straight for the *Dark Side Of The Moon*. Not content to linger in any one sound-escape for too long, sweeping strings, vibraphones and otherworldly synth stylings transform the band's grandiose orchestration into sci-fi Bacharach-ian pop bacchanalia. The album passionately evokes the romantic sweetness and lurching eeriness of a Danny Elfman film score, manifesting most purely in the 10-minute closer, "Jekyll And Hyde Suite." With their cinematic and epic leanings, Pilotdrift are sure to draw comparisons to fellow Lone Star Staters, Explosions In The Sky. Yet *Water Sphere* surpasses the output from Pilotdrift's contemporaries with a much more ambitious scope. Small towns sure have a funny way of causing little boys to think big.

>>>MATTHEW FIELD

Link www.pilotdrift.com

File Under Houston, we have lift off
RIYL: Air, Decemberists, Space Oddity-era David Bowie

PORTASTATIC

Bright Ideas Merge



With Superchunk in a four-years-and-running creative drought, Mac McCaughan's full-time side gig, Portastatic, has started to eclipse his past. 2003's *Summer Of The Shark* gently chronicled his post-9/11 confusions, garnering critical acclaim for his rousing, un-fusing-like anthems. Joined by Superchunker Jim Wilbur and his brother Matt on drums, McCaughan has assembled 10 new songs, more than half of which rank among his best songwriting to date. "White Wave" is the Superchunk anthem that could have been, with a perfectly-symmetrical, pogoistic riff and innocence-lost lyrics—well, it has something to do with TV static and optimistic "whoa whoos." Conversely, "Little Fern" shows the helium-voiced singer's concern for his two-year-old daughter, Dona, growing up in a tainted world, choking out "Keep your head buried, my little fern." But it all culminates on "The Soft Rewind," when McCaughan blends his gung-ho rock calls ("Yeaaah!") with self-inspection about "the perfect sunset." This, it seems like just the dawn... >>>KORY GNOW

Link www.portastatic.com

File Under Superdread
RIYL: Superchunk, Bruce Springsteen, Crooked Fingers

PUMPKINHEAD

Orange Moon Over Brooklyn Soulspazm



Park Slope's Pumpkinhead has banged around Brooklyn for ages, spitting battle raps and promoting the early '90s hip-hop credo of loop-based beats and hard, witty rhymes. Criticized by fans for being nothing more than a punchline pundit, Pumpkinhead has reinvented himself on his third album, bringing storylines and insights in spades. Attacking snobs in trucker hats and white tees alike, Pumpkinhead doesn't subscribe to any camp's philosophy, criticizing gun talk while still threatening to break your teeth. Buoyed by Marco Polo's consistently dope Beatnut-era beats (thank God somebody is still using rhythmic scratching!), Pumpkinhead stits on military service, praises the grace found in grinding and still finds time for posse cuts. Though *Orange Moon* has a few potholes (a dumb Napoleon Dynamite skit and a recycled "woman as hip-hop" metaphor), most criticisms seem trivial in the face of songs like "Rock On." A tale of his life laid over a priceless A Silver Mt. Zion sample, its veteran mix of story, insight, failure and faith proves three times is a charm. >>>OWEN STROCK

Link www.soulspazm.com

File Under Three Times Dope
RIYL: Juggaknots, Jean Grae, Boot Camp Click, Masta Ace

SILVER JEW

Tanglewood Numbers Drag City



A master of word combinations and no less than a poet (he holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Massachusetts and published a well-received book of poetry), Silver Jew's frontman David Berman opens his new album boldly with a strong heart and a cool, new word. On "Punks In The Beelight," a dark twinkle of a country rock song, lyrics lock step with gut feeling as he simply repeats, "I loved you to the max!" over and over again, in a way we can all relate. The rest of *Tanglewood Numbers* is less direct and steel-eyed, stretching from sily to lovely to romantic to ramshackle. "The Farmer's Hotel," for instance, wanders at a talk-sing clip that has us checking our watch about six minutes in. The rest, however, is a place you wish you could visit, somewhere southern and colorful with banjos, waltzing fiddles, traditional hymns, and Berman's wife, Cassie, lending her voice to ease the burden when our hearts are too heavy. >>>STEVEN CHEN

Link www.dragcity.com

File Under Wild Kindness

RIYL: Malkmus, Iron & Wine, Palace

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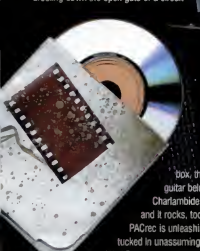


Skzzz!

A Column For Noise And Stuff

By Christopher R. Weingarten

When two titans of laptop agro-noise, **Russell Haswell** and **Florian Hecker**, joined unholy forces to remix Swiss household-electronics surpans *Voice Crack*, they were livid that the subsequent release was 18 decibels quieter than the provided masters. Tireless patron to picky pixel-pushers, Austrian label Mego, is releasing "Revision: Orange-Time-Shock-Format-Wave-Re-Composition" as a one-sided 12" full of laptop squelch that bucks and snaps like a tape-squeezing masterpiece, and whose colorful sproings and skurps belie the black grooveless side underneath. Tense on 45, frightening on 33. www.mego.at. Ezra Buchta and Erika Anderson are two L.A. fuzz-cullers who make gorgeously suffocating guitar/machine popfolk as tour musicians for Amps For Christ and their own *Gowns*. Their handmade 3" CD-R *Dangers Of Intimacy* (Folktales, pictured below) features gold-sprayed pieces of wheat, and six shuddery feedback rambles that have an uneasy sexiness and a sexy uneasiness: whispery folk tunes slowly drooling down the open guts of a circuit.



box, the wind copping in the foreground, a guitar being gently wrangled. All the shamble of Charlatambol, but it's scary as the Bros. Grimm and it rocks, too. folktalesrecords.kk... Hollywood's PACo is unleashing plenty of hideous spoonloose tucked in unassuming cardboard sleeves. Bad Dreams by Wolf Eyes tape-molester Aaron Dillaway (above) is a hazy fever vision that is far more hypnotic and depressing than his main gig, but still sounds like a dozen cassette recorders having a fight in a garbage disposal. Even better for those haunted house parties is *Gate To Gate's I Turn Black Keys*, an icy black-metal-induced throb culled by Chondritic Sound's Greh and Hair Police guitarist Mike Connelly. It's a full 80 minutes of black-as-pitch sludgebark, and surprisingly digestible tundra-souzz for people in corpsepaint to cuddle to. www.heartheatnoise.com. Cambridge, Massachusetts trio **Heathen Shame** make deliciously punishing high-decibel improv drone with two guitars and a hyper-distorted trumpet (which is sometimes played through a piece of sheet metal), like a squealing SunD))) for the Double Leopards set. Their second album, *Speed The Parting Guest* (Twisted Village), kicks off with a 30-minute howl that's like a pair of jet engines trying to sing a lullaby. www.twistedvillage.com. ... Far less subtle about their doom-swinging tendencies is New York guitar and electronics duo *Squaw*, whose *Tombworld* (SQT) is a dangerously slow and brooding black lava lamp where guitar drones burble about in between soupy oscillator screams. sqr.freesheill.org. Don't hesitate to send small-run noise CDs, CD-Rs, cassettes, vinyl, lathe-cut objects and inaudible art projects to Skzzz! 151 W. 25th St., 12th fl., New York, NY 10001.

STELLASTARR* Harmonies For The Haunted

RCA



It's pretty clear from the get-go that Stellastarr* don't see any good reason why heartfelt classics such as the Cure and Simple Minds

shouldn't be emulated if only for ends as basic as nostalgia and lovesickness. The resemblance to a John Hughes movie on *Harmonies For The Haunted*, the band's second album, is wholly undisguised, so that once recognition registers and the annoyance wears off (for some it may never), the music achieves a naive yet irresistible height—much like the kind that compels each and every one of us to throw caution to the wind anytime Robert Smith leads a chorus. Inexplicably not British but homegrown in Brooklyn, Stellastarr* aren't afraid to make declarations like "Damn this foolish heart," with unabashed gusto, fully equipped with shimmering guitars and soaring backing vocals from bassist Amanda Tannen. In a borough that prides itself on buckling trends, Stellastarr* throw creativity to the wind, immersing themselves so deeply in one that they manage to dig up some of its original white-hot heat. >>>STEVEN CHEN

Link www.stellastarr.com

File Under Don't you forget about the '80s RIYL: The Cure, Echo & The Bunnymen, VHS Or Beta

SUPER FURRY ANIMALS

Love Kraft Beggars Banquet



With a decade behind them, Welsh collective Super Furry Animals remain as fresh as the day they were formed. Their seventh album takes a more laidback approach to their traditionally sunny (slightly sinister) psychedelia, but not without the layered depths they've been plunging since 2001's epic *Rings Around The World*. For pure grandiosity, opener "Zoom!" features a full Spanish choir spinning gothic undertones, while "Atomik Lust" jumps casually from transcendent melody to guitar/piano freakout as if it were the most natural thing in the world. "Lazer Beam" is the bounciest of the decidedly languid bunch, and an obvious choice for a single, but it's in the quieter moments that *Love Kraft* soars so easily over and beyond SFA's so-called contemporaries. With almost every band member contributing to both the songwriting and the vocals for the first time, the group has managed to not only stay cohesive, but also to counteract the heat of the seemingly unending post-punk resurgence by remaining magnificently, supernaturally cool. >>>DOUG LEVY

Link www.superfurry.com

File Under Kraft works

RIYL: The Bees, the Beta Band, Supergrass

WOLF PARADE Apologies To The Queen Mary

Sub Pop



It wouldn't be fair to call indie-poppers Wolf Parade just a few guys geeked on Modest Mouse, even if they obviously are. Dan

Boeckner and Spencer Krug's vocals rip, slur and explode a lot like Isaac Brock's, and WPP's ragged guitars and keyboards do conjure up that tonesome, crowded west. To be fair, it was Brock who was reverse-geeked enough to bring the Montreal quartet on tour, and to produce their first LP *Apologies To The Queen Mary*. Taking cues from the Arcade Fire's *Funeral* (to which drummer Arlen Thompson contributed), "I'll Believe In Anything" cuts as tasty a slice of art-rock version to be consumed this year. "Dinner Bells" is a slow burner that slants and enchants with plenty of space between notes while synth-driven tracks such as "Fancy Claps" and "This Heart's On Fire" are where the Unicorns could be heard heading. Screw pioneering a sound. Didn't Modest Mouse start as a few guys geeked on some band called Built To Spill?

>>>NEED FISCHER

Link www.wolfparade.cb.net

File Under Good News For People Who Love RIYL: Modest Mouse, the Flaming Lips, Arcade Fire

XBXX Sixth In Sixes

Polyvinyl



The sophomore album from these Mobile, Alabama, noise spazzes delivers the textbook genre freak-out: screamed vocals, dissonant thrash shit-fits and garbled micro-dripped punctuated by Casiotone short circuits. The formula wears thin, despite the fact that nearly all of *Sixth In Sixes* 18 tracks clock in at about a minute and a half. Blogging freakazoid noise nerds will argue that hyperactive blusterfuck shlick is a much needed rock 'n' roll deconstructionist wake-up call, but it's high time to call bullshit on a lot of the noise scene. Were it not for a stamp of approval from folks like Sonic Youth and Steve Albini, xbxx could just as well be any of the sloppy, third-rate power violence bands from any of the Slap-A-Ham 7-inch corners. Granted, they are still more playful, more endeavoring and less pretentious than most of their contemporaries (and their live shows are absolutely better skelter), but unfortunately, the chaos has become cliché. Be it guitars, bones or indie-rock paradigms, who isn't smashing something? >>>MATTHEW FIELD

Link www.xbxxr.com

File Under Blown Load RIYL: Ex-Models, Arab On Radar, Burmese



DEEP COVER

CocoRosie's Bianca Casady explains the horny, unicorny cover art to their haunted toybox opus *Noah's Ark* (Touch And Go).

Interview by Christopher R. Weingarten

1. I see a vague concept of the record art as a children's bible book. The font is a cartoony bible font. It's like kids created their own bible book. I don't know what all this religious nonsense is. We weren't around it at all. I guess I went to some youth groups as a kid. Maybe I haven't realized how much they influenced me. I was just going for the social life. Free cupcakes, dirty sleepovers, stuff like that. I never paid any attention to what they were saying. It was more pervy than that.

2. I drew on a large book cover, like the inside of a book. I got it in France at a flea market. Maybe it was an old record book, you know, for numbers and stuff.



3. We kind of like to think of it as a dejected, left behind creature. They're kind of like zebracorns. I like to think there's a unicorn out there for every animal. Like a giraffecorn, a zebracorn... They're just in a moment of ecstasy, celebrating love.

4. It's like tears or blood. It's the female. She's in this moment of ecstasy but also it's kind of overwhelming. So she's like bleeding or crying.

5. It's a drawing of mine, and I allowed my sister to tweak the color. It wasn't intended for the album. I just started drawing animals. Maybe it's living in New York City and it's a modern time. Looking toward more primitive things is sort of a rich source material to draw from when being in such an opposing context. I haven't been to the zoo since third grade and I got in a terrible fight with my best friend. I tried to get her to hold my Sno-Kone cause it was dripping all over my new outfit and she wouldn't take it. And I just threw the Sno-Kone. It was a really negative experience. Maybe I'm still holding it to the zoo.

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